

Multiple Modernities and Social Change: the Case of University Students
in Namibia

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ABSTRACT

The paradigm of multiple modernities proposes that alternative modernities have formed across the globe as a result of social change. This paradigm stands in contrast to evolutionary and modernization theories, as well as theories of globalizing modernity, which argue that all societies are moving in the similar direction and that Western modernity is universalizing. Focusing on two specific trends, which are the closure of the political sphere for students and young people in general versus the growing role of women in the political sphere, it is suggested in this case study that Namibia is one of the societies that is characterized by distinctive social change. Particular attention is paid to the interrelationships between customs, invented traditions and the modern Western condition drawing on quantitative and qualitative data on Namibian university students and an extensive literature review to demonstrate that Namibia has an alternative type of the modern.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ASO – The Academy of Student’s Organization
CoD – The Congress of Democrats
DTA – The Democratic Turnhalle Alliance
IMF – The International Monetary Fund
IPPR – The Institute for Public Policy Research
NABSO – The Namibian Black Student Organization
NACOS – The Namibian Council of Students
NAMSO – The Namibian Student Organization
NANSO – The Namibia National Student’s Organization
NGO – Non-governmental organization
NUDO – The National Unity Democratic Organisation of Namibia
NWMN – The Namibian Women's Manifesto Network
OPO - The Ovamboland People’s Organization
PLAN - The People's Liberation Army of Namibia
RDP – The Rally for Democracy and Progress
RDPYL – The Rally for Democracy and Progress Youth League
SPYL – The South West Africa People’s Organization (SWAPO) Party Youth League
SRC – The Students’ Representative Council
SWAPO – The South West Africa People’s Organization
SWASB – The South West Africa Student Body
UNAM – The University of Namibia
UNICEF – The United Nations Children's Fund

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Suddenly it becomes possible that they are just *other*,
that we ourselves are an “other” among others.
(Ricoeur 1965, p. 278)

The paradigm of multiple or alternative modernities,¹ proposed in the beginning of the 1990s, suggests the formation of various alternative modernities around the world as a result of social change. In essence, social change means the adaptation to changing international and external conditions. As the elements of Western modernity, which originated in Western Europe, were adapted in various societies, the distinctive identities characterizing these societies have been maintained. I suggest that Namibia is one of the societies, which have an alternative type of the modern. Namibian modernity is characterized by a particular social change, which is especially noticeable in a specific interrelationship between invented traditions, customs, and the modern Western.²

In this case study, I adopt an interdisciplinary perspective on social change and look at it as changes in political and social spheres. When analyzing social change from sociological, political science and gender perspectives, one has to limit himself or herself to the examination of certain processes. In this work, the focus will be on two specific trends characterizing Namibian modernity: the closure of the political sphere for university students and youth in general versus the growing role of women in the political sphere. I chose to analyze these trends since they stand in stark contrast to each other and can serve well to call into question dominant theories of social change. In addition, by focusing on these trends I hope to show that Namibia has its own type of the modern.

As these trends are not static and have formed as a result of changing social, political and economic circumstances, in this thesis I will provide a literature review on Namibian pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence experiences situating it within the context of social

¹ I will use the terms “multiple modernities” and “alternative modernities” interchangeably.

² In this work, anything that is associated with Western modernity is defined as the modern Western.

change that has taken place in the whole region of Sub-Saharan Africa¹ over time. The main arguments will be substantiated by the research findings. Central to the study that I undertake is the following overarching question: “What can the paradigm of multiple modernities add to our understanding of social change in Namibia from the interdisciplinary perspective when applied to the case of political behavior and views on politics of Namibian university students in general and female and male students in comparison?”

I will draw on evolutionary and modernization theories and theories of globalizing modernity and will attempt to show that in contrast to the paradigm of multiple modernities they cannot provide an adequate explanation of social change, particularly when it comes to non-Western societies. The paradigm of multiple modernities is proposed as an alternative and more nuanced approach towards the analysis of social change in Namibia. University students represent the main focus of the study. Initially, I was interested in political participation of Namibian university students and factors that affect their activity in politics. In the course of the consultations with the former committee, I made a decision to refocus my work and concentrate on the analysis of social change in Namibia based on the example of university students. This approach worked well since world history, including the history of Sub-Saharan Africa in general and Namibia in particular, has shown that students and other young people often become agents of social change. In Namibia, for instance, students and youth as a whole played an active role in the struggle for liberation (1966-1988). Another reason why university students are an important social group to examine when one analyzes social change in Namibia is that the majority of them come from villages or townships to study in the capital city, Windhoek. They are exposed to the influences of urban environment and a Western system of higher education, but at the same time university students hold strong bonds with their communities. In addition, we can see dramatically the change in the position of a particular social group in the example of Namibian university students. Even though students and youth in general were important actors in the liberation struggle, after the country gained independence, they were marginalized from

¹ Northern Africa is not included in the analysis since it has more in common with the Middle East than with Sub-Saharan Africa. Hereafter, I will use the terms Sub-Saharan Africa and Africa interchangeably.

the political sphere. This trend continued to persist up until 2009, the year when I conducted my research.¹

In this study, I make a number of contributions to research in sociology, political science, and gender studies. First, up until now there has not been much empirical research in these disciplines that demonstrates the existence of multiple modernities. To a certain extent, my work addresses this gap in the analysis. Second, in the discourse on alternative modernities, the dichotomy of custom and the modern Western condition is critically questioned. However, the phenomenon of invented tradition is omitted from the analysis. I address this shortcoming in the study. Third, I conducted a case study analysis and used mixed methods in the research work. To my knowledge, at the time I conducted the work, none of the preceding research on university students in Namibia had employed both qualitative and quantitative methods and had been as in-depth and detailed as mine. Fourth, I provide an opportunity for students to voice their views on social and political issues. As it will be shown in this work, students are one of the disadvantaged groups in Namibian society. Therefore, giving them voice is beneficial both for students and the researcher. Finally, empirical sociological, political science and gender research on Namibia in general is limited, which makes this study particularly valuable.

As noted above, empirical sociological, political science and gender studies on alternative modernities have been lacking, and as a result, no well-developed methodology of research on multiple modernities currently exists in these three disciplines. I suggest that a macro analysis of an alternative modernity that involves individual- or group-level data is acceptable, as long as the connection between individuals, or a particular social group, and political and social institutions and processes is demonstrated. Within the context of this study, it will be shown that Namibian social and political processes and institutions have an effect on the position of Namibian university students as a distinctive social group and female university students as a part of female population.

I propose several fundamental principles of the analysis of social change in Namibia that guide my research into what multiple modernities can contribute to our understanding of social change in the country from the interdisciplinary perspective: 1) the concept of modernity is not rejected; instead it is reconsidered. It is suggested to examine events that take place in Namibia,

¹ It will be shown, however, that female students as a part of female population have gained ground in the political sphere.

as well as in Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole and other world regions, through the lens of the paradigm of multiple or alternative modernities; 2) the idea of a totality of Western modernity as applied to the analysis of social change in non-Western parts of the world is questioned through the critical examination of evolutionary and modernization theories and theories of globalizing modernity and through the comparison of Namibian modernity to the ideal type of Western modernity; 3) a dichotomy of “modern” and “traditional” is reconsidered in the light of the phenomenon of invented traditions; and 4) the emphasis is on the complexity of social change in Namibia that is reflected in social and political spheres.

I use mixed methods in collecting data, including a survey, focus groups, informal discussions with experts and students, and an examination of existing literature. The advantage of mixed methods is that they minimize weaknesses of each particular method employed in research. Therefore, their use is beneficial when one conducts a case study analysis. The subject of my work, as mentioned before, is university students. In particular, I focus on undergraduate students enrolled in full- and part-time programs and who are not older than thirty-five.¹

I chose to focus on Namibia for several reasons. First, Namibia is an under-researched country, especially compared to some other African countries like South Africa, Ghana, or Nigeria. Therefore, my intention was to contribute to the knowledge of social change in regards to political and social spheres in Namibia. Second, in the last twenty years, researchers have been paying insufficient attention to studying students and youth in general not only in Namibia but in Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. Third, Namibia gained independence relatively recently and was still in the transitional period in 2009 when I collected data there. This was a unique time for the new political and social practices to take place, which provided an exciting opportunity for students of social change. Fourth, my intention was to produce a document that could potentially be available to as many people in Namibia as possible. In this country, academic freedom is guaranteed by the Constitution and free exchange of information is in many cases not infringed upon. Therefore, the possibility of sharing the results of my work with anyone who is from Namibia and who is interested in what is happening in Namibian political and social spheres made me all the more enthusiastic about conducting the research.

¹ According to the official governmental definition, youth are a group of people of age 15-35 (Revised National Youth Policy for Namibia, 2001). That is why students older than thirty-five were not asked to participate in the survey, focus groups, or informal discussions.

My findings, discussion, and analysis are presented in the following six chapters and appendices. In chapter two, I consider methodology of the study, which includes a design of qualitative and quantitative research I conducted. Chapter three is devoted to the discussion of theories of social change, such as evolutionary and modernization theories and theories of globalizing modernity, as well as to the paradigm of multiple or alternative modernities. In this chapter, I also provide conceptual and analytical frameworks of my study. In addition, I discuss custom, invented tradition, and the modern Western within the context of changes that have taken place in political and social spheres in Namibia, as well as in Africa as a whole. In chapter four, I focus on Namibian historico-political background situating it within the context of the historical and political background of the region of Sub-Saharan Africa. In chapter five, I look at the closure of the political sphere for students and youth in general that occurred in Namibia. To trace the change, the role of youth and students during the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence periods is considered. The effects of the closure of the political sphere are demonstrated in research findings. In chapter six, I focus on the shifting role of Namibian women in the political sphere since the beginning of the 1990s. I begin with pre-colonial and colonial times and then move on to the discussion of the position of women in the post-independence period in Namibia and in the rest of Africa. The arguments that I propose are substantiated by research findings. In chapter seven, I critically analyse the results of my work. Limitations and implications of the study, as well as questions for future sociological, political science and gender analyses are also considered in this chapter. A significant amount of information is presented in appendices that include a description of the relationships of constitutional bodies in Namibia, a questionnaire and questions for focus groups, as well as bivariate, factor and casual analyses of quantitative data. In summary, the following chapters and appendices illustrate what the paradigm of multiple modernities can add to our understanding of social change in Namibia from the interdisciplinary perspective.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

As it was noted in the introduction, initially my intent was to explore the reasons for the decline in political participation of Namibian students and youth in general since independence. After collecting and analyzing data, the focus of my work shifted to the analysis of social change in Namibia with a specific focus on two major themes, namely the closure of political sphere for university students and youth in general and a growing role of women in the political sphere, due to the discovery of several interesting trends. As noted in the previous chapter, I analyze these trends to show that Namibia is characterized by alternative modernity in contrast to main postulates of dominant theories of social change. In this chapter, I will describe research methods used in conducting my research.

2.2 Description of the Research Design

I chose to use a case study analysis as my methodology. Case studies are based on a detailed and in-depth investigation of a particular social group and often employ a variety of research methods. With respect to my work, a case study methodology allowed me to conduct an extensive and thorough analysis of Namibian university students as a whole and female students as a part of a female population in relation to the political sphere. I decided to use both quantitative and qualitative methods in my work because I wanted to acquire information from as many Namibian university students as possible and then to clarify certain aspects and elaborate on important issues related to politics and political participation by means of conducting focus groups, having informal conversations with experts and students, and reviewing relevant literature. Mixed methods also help mitigate the weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis. Quantitative methods provide an opportunity to collect data on a large number of research subjects but do not provide a level of depth and detail characteristic of qualitative research methods. Qualitative methods allow one to get at the nuances of difference. They pull out specificities that are missed in quantitative data. I also chose to use mixed methods because at the time I conducted my research there had been no studies that used both qualitative and quantitative methods to examine students' participation in Namibian politics. Therefore, my

research was intended to provide a more detailed picture. As any other researcher who chooses to use mixed methods, I had to decide which one, qualitative or quantitative, would be primary. It was determined that a survey would be conducted first supported by focus groups, informal discussion with experts and students, and a literature review.¹

The survey was conducted in two institutions of higher education, namely UNAM and the Polytechnic of Namibia, in April and the beginning of May 2009. Before conducting the survey in Namibia, I tested a questionnaire in one of the classes at the University of Saskatchewan. I asked students not only to fill out the form but to share their opinion about what was confusing and should be changed in the questionnaire. Some comments were very useful and helped improve the form. Upon my arrival in Namibia, I also received feedback from one student from the Polytechnic of Namibia and a social scientist who had worked in different African countries. Their comments were incorporated as well. The survey population was undergraduate students who studied in either UNAM or the Polytechnic of Namibia. Main campuses of both universities are situated in Namibia's capital city, Windhoek. In 2009, The University of Namibia had three fully functional campuses outside Windhoek.² However, I did not conduct a survey there for the two following reasons: 1) the number of students was small on those campuses; therefore, the inclusion of these students into the sample could not significantly affect the distribution of responses to the survey questions; and, 2) because of the geographical location in the North of the country, the campuses were not as representative of the overall population of university students as the main campus. The Polytechnic of Namibia had only one campus.

The research sample that I used was stratified according to faculty or school and program. At the time when I conducted research, there were seven faculties at the University of Namibia: Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Economics and Management Science, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology, and Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences. The Polytechnic of Namibia had five schools: School of Engineering, School of Information

¹ The survey, focus groups, and informal interviews were conducted in English, the national language since independence. English was chosen because all university courses are taught in this language.

² I considered the Neudamm Agricultural Campus a part of the main campus because students enrolled in the programs at the Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources had classes on the main campus.

Technology, School of Communication, School of Natural Resources and Tourism, and School of Business and Management. In the Polytechnic of Namibia, there were certificate, diploma and B. Tech programs. As for UNAM, BSc, BA, B Juris and other bachelor program were offered. These programs lasted the same amount of time as B. Tech programs in the Polytechnic of Namibia. I initially developed separate subsamples for students in programs that lasted three or four years (bachelor and some diploma programs) and for students in programs that lasted one or two years (certificate and some diploma programs). I assumed that students who are in short-term programs may have a different intention or purpose to be at the university or have a different background compared to students in longer programs.

I assigned a specific code to each course in every appropriate program at each faculty or school. If a course was running at two or more faculties, I ascribed it to the faculty/school that offered it so that no course had a higher chance to be selected than others. I randomly chose five numbers for each faculty or school. After finding the classes, I contacted the instructors to ask whether I could come to their classes and administer questionnaires to their students. I started with the first number and if the number of students was not sufficient in the class for my sample I moved to the second number and surveyed another class. I calculated the size of the sample for the universities based on the data on the number of students in full-time and part-time undergraduate programs provided by university statisticians. The data on the number of students in various programs and faculties at UNAM was for 2008, whereas the data on the number of students in undergraduate programs in the Polytechnic of Namibia was for 2009. The data for students enrolled in distance, graduate, and professional programs and courses were excluded from my sample. In the case of distance education, it was done because students taking distance courses reside predominantly in towns or localities other than the capital city. Therefore, it was not possible for me to survey them. As for graduate students, they were excluded because of their age, as were the professionals taking university courses.

To have a representative sample, I calculated the ratio of students at a particular faculty or school to the total number of undergraduate students. The number of classes in which I conducted a survey was twenty-two. I initially planned to have a sample of 250 students for each university. However, because some of the classes in UNAM and the Polytechnic of Namibia were large, I ended up having 947 completed questionnaires for both universities. There were 637 responses from UNAM students and 307 responses from the students at the Polytechnic of

Namibia and 385 responses from male students and 562 responses from female students. After using a weighting procedure in SPSS, I found that there was no difference if I weighted cases according to the type of a program (certificate and short diploma programs versus long diploma and bachelor programs) or if I did not use weighting. That is why I decided not to employ this procedure. The number of students in each class varied from 3 to about 270. In only three classes students took the questionnaires home and returned them later. In all other classes they filled out the questionnaires in the class. Students from abroad, students who were older than thirty-five, or students who were not willing to participate in the survey had a chance either to leave the classroom or to work on their own. Teachers in the classes that I randomly selected were very cooperative. All of them allowed me to come to their class to conduct the survey.

So far I have discussed the first stage of my work. In the second stage, I conducted focus groups with some of the surveyed students, which took place in May 2009. In the beginning, I planned to run a correlation analysis of the data gathered in the survey before conducting focus groups so that I could choose some questions from the questionnaire for the group discussions. However, due to the limitations of my student version of SPSS,¹ I could not do it. As an alternative, I decided to choose three questions related to the government from the questionnaire. One was on the interest of governmental officials in personal well-being of students; the second one was on the interest of officials in well-being of the community a student is coming from; and the third one was on trust in governmental officials. I asked the first two questions in the first and second focus groups, whereas the third question (on trust) was raised in two other focus groups that followed. I estimated that I would have enough information on each question if I asked it only in two focus groups out of four. I also used two other questions from the questionnaire in group discussions. The first, which I asked in the first three focus groups, was, “Do you think that you have more opportunities to participate in politics than your parents had at your age?” The second one, which was addressed in the third and fourth focus groups, was, “How much difference do you think you can personally make at community, regional, and national levels?” Apart from that, in all group discussions I asked a question if participants considered Namibia a democratic country. I selected several questions from the questionnaire for focus groups to better understand why students provided a certain answer and to see how students’ answers to these

¹ Upon arrival in Canada, I conducted a statistical analysis using a standard version of SPSS.

questions related to their views on political participation and their position with respect to the political system of the country. I came up with other questions for focus groups after the initial analysis of students' answers to questions in the questionnaires and after consulting with my supervisor. Some of these questions dealt with the sources of information on politics students usually use, the activity of university students in politics and ways to increase it, and the elders' attention in politics to the voice of young people (for the complete list of questions see Appendix 3). As it turned out, the data collected in focus groups was useful for the analysis of social change with respect to Namibian students and young people in general, which I conducted at the later stage of my work.

My intention was to select an equal number of female and male students for each group discussion. I also paid attention to whether a student participated in political activity during the previous year. Ideally, I wanted to have an equal number of students in each of these categories. I also believed that it was important to have an equal number of students from the University of Namibia and the Polytechnic of Namibia in each focus group. In the beginning, I planned to have one focus group with the students who support the governing party, one focus group with the students who stand for opposition parties, and one focus group with the participants who do not know which party they will vote for or those who will not vote. However, the first focus group showed an interesting thing. This group discussion was supposed to be only with supporters of South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO). However, one participant who indicated SWAPO as the party he was going to vote for in the questionnaire said during the discussion that he would not participate in elections; another student said that she supports the Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP) while in the questionnaire she indicated SWAPO. This was the reason why I decided to have a second focus group with both the supporters of the ruling party and those who will not vote or do not want to vote¹ and the third focus group with supporters of opposition parties. Other factors that I took into consideration while choosing potential participants for group discussions were their region of origin and their ethnicity or tribe; this was used to ensure that the selection of participants reflected at least partly the ethnic distribution of the population in the country. For the first, second and third focus groups, I wanted to have only

¹ However, only SWAPO supporters came for the discussion.

Ovambo people from the North.¹ In the end, only one Ovambo student was from the central region of Kharas, whereas others were from the North. The fourth focus group was planned to be with students from central and southern regions of the country who are from ethnic minority groups regardless of their political affiliations. The choice of the criteria for selecting the participants for focus groups was stipulated by an initial examination of answers in questionnaires and by the informal discussions with experts and students. My qualitative research did not cover the views of students from several ethnic minority groups. This was primarily because many ethnic groups, such as Nama and Damara, were underrepresented at both universities. In addition, several students from ethnic minority groups did not show up for group discussions.

During my two-month stay in Namibia I also spent one week in the National Library of Namibia collecting and reading the documents, newspaper articles and other sources of information that were not available in Canadian libraries. In addition, I had a chance to meet with four experts on politics and youth participation. One of them was a member of the Department of Sociology at UNAM; the second one was a lecturer in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies at UNAM. The third expert was one of researchers in the Institute for Public Policy Research (Windhoek, Namibia), and the fourth one was a member of the Election Commission of Namibia. I also met with a representative from the Namibia National Student's Organization (NANSO), a member of the Youth National Council of Namibia, and two members of Students' Representative Councils (SRCs) both at UNAM and the Polytechnic of Namibia. Discussions with these people provided invaluable information on my topic of interest, particularly where it was difficult to find any published sources. Information collected during discussions with experts was primarily used in the chapter on Namibian political context (chapter four) and the chapter that covers the closure of the political sphere for Namibian university students and youth in general (chapter five). Apart from that, I had informal discussions with five students before conducting focus groups. Two of these students were SWAPO supporters, including the one who was a member of SWAPO Party Youth League (SPYL), while two other students did not support any particular political party, and the fifth student was a member of RDP Youth League (RDPYL). Meetings with these students provided some additional insights

¹ Ovambos comprise more than 50% of the population.

on the topic and helped me see what I should pay attention to in focus groups. Informal discussions with experts and students also had an impact on my thought process while writing this work. They helped me to better understand the political and social situation in the country and its effects on university students, including female students.

2.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I gave a detailed description of the design and implementation of my research. In particular, I described research methods, sampling, as well as the choice of participants and questions for focus groups. I also described informal discussions that I had during my stay in Namibia and provided a justification of using the mixed methods and conducting research on the main UNAM campus.

CHAPTER THREE
THEORIES AND PARADIGMS OF SOCIAL CHANGE. INVENTED TRADITION,
CUSTOM, AND THE MODERN WESTERN IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

3.1 Introduction

Social change has always been central to the study of society. There are two main approaches for determining what constitutes social change. The first one presents social change in narrow terms, namely as changes that take place as a reaction to various factors within the social structure. The second approach is more comprehensive; it includes alterations in economy, society, politics, and culture (Burke, 2005). In this thesis, social change is viewed in broad terms as alternations that take place in political and social spheres, including alternations in gender roles. Of particular interests are the changes that affect Namibian university students (female versus male students and students as a whole), Namibia, and the region of Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole.

Sztompka (1994) proposes to divide different approaches to the study of social change into three main categories: evolutionism, which includes classical evolutionism, neo-evolutionism, and theories of modernization; historical materialism; and theories of historical cycles. Most notably, however, he omits a paradigm of multiple modernities and theories of globalizing modernity. For the purposes of my work, I focus on the critique of the first group of theories outlined by Sztompka. In addition to the critical assessment of theories based on evolutionism with respect to social change in Namibia, I also evaluate one of the theories of globalizing modernity and propose the paradigm of multiple modernities as an alternative approach to the description of social change in Namibia.

3.2 Defining Modernity

Before I discuss theories of social change and the paradigm of multiple or alternative modernities, the concept of modernity has to be explained. Rengger (1995) proposes two ways of looking at modernity. The first way can be called “personified” as modernity is considered to have almost personal features. It “defines itself,” “gives modern articulations to persistent questions of meaning,” and can have “optimistic moments” (Connolly, 1988). Even though modernity is an epoch by this definition, it is not determined by a particular temporal location and time. This contrasts the second way of approaching modernity, which is best defined by

Giddens (1990), according to whom modernity is “modes of social life or organization which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence” (1990, p. 1). In this approach, modernity is referred to specific time and place. There is also another way of looking at modernity in the historical sense, in which modernity is viewed as the one that developed in the course of the relationships between Europeans and others. In other words, modernity cannot be considered as a phenomenon formed in isolation from the rest of the world (Geschiere, Meyer & Pels, 2008; Mitchell, 2000). Sztompka (1994) also underlines two approaches for defining modernity, which partly overlap with the Rengger’s classification. The first approach is the same as the second one outlined by Rengger (1995). This approach, called by Sztompka (1994) “historical,” connects modernity to a certain time period and location. The second approach, defined as analytical, looks at the qualitative side of modernity. In other words, it raises the question of what constitutes the ideal type of modernity. The aspects of the ideal type of modernity include but are not limited to the following: 1) growing democratization and increasing political and civil rights for larger social groups; 2) gradual disappearance of customs; 3) individualism, the role of an individual is prevailing in the “modern” society in contrast to a tribe, community, or group whose role is diminished (Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1990); and 4) urbanization, industrialization, and differentiation of labour (Sztompka, 1994). To be sure, in all the above-mentioned approaches, except for the personified one, modernity is seen as Western-based.

In my work, I analyze modernity as a phenomenon that is linked to a certain time period and location. In particular, I refer to modernity that started developing in Europe from the seventeenth century as Western modernity, which is contrasted to modernities that have developed in other parts of the world, including Namibia. And even though I do not discuss in detail the effects of historical interrelationships of Europeans with others on Western modernity, I support the idea that the project of Western modernity could not have been further implemented without colonization of Africa, as well as of other regions. I also focus on qualitative characteristics of Namibian modernity and compare them to the ideal type of Western modernity outlined in the previous paragraph and used in major theories and paradigms of social change.

With the chosen approaches to modernity outlined, we can move on to the discussion of theories and paradigms of social change. It will be historically accurate to start with evolutionism and neo-evolutionism.

3.3 Evolutionism and Neo-Evolutionism

The founding fathers of sociology, Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Ferdinand Tonnies, set the stage for exploring social change situating their analysis within the framework of evolutionism. Even though some differences exist between the authors, there are certain fundamental principles that all of them seem to follow. First, social change is directional. What we see is a movement from simple to complex, from primitive to developed, and from chaotic to the organized. Second, the change is seen as inevitable and natural. Any periods of stagnation or stability are regarded as hindering the change and are exceptions. Third, the only object that experiences the change is the whole of humanity. Any change in subsystems or elements is conceived exclusively as a contribution to the total evolution of society (Sztompka, 1994). Fourth, the change is seen as unilinear and it follows a pre-established trajectory. The differences among cultures or societies within mankind are explained by the pace of evolutionary process, which can be slow or rapid. Ultimately, however, the change is the same for all the societies in the world. The societies that are more “primitive” will inevitably follow in the path of more developed ones. In this respect, so-called traditional societies are conceived as lacking development and maturity (Smith, 1976). Fifth, according to evolutionism, human civilization has gone through the series of stages. Each of them is more advanced than the previous one (Smelser, 1992). Therefore, social change is associated with progress.¹ In other words, it leads to a constant improvement of the human condition (Sztompka, 1994).

Over time classical evolutionism became subject to criticism. First, the claim that there is a certain historical pattern was put into question. Many professional historians have tried to prove the opposite, that historical events are contingent. A second core assumption of classical evolutionism in question was that all humankind experiences evolutionary change. Extensive heterogeneity of a population has been demonstrated by social anthropologists who started looking at local communities, tribes, civilizations, and nation-states as separate units that can undergo individual evolutionary changes. Finally, the claim that evolution is unilinear was put

¹ This view was supported by almost all evolutionists, with the exception of Tonnies, who was hesitant about the consequences of evolutionary change. In the work called *Gemeinschaft und Gessellschaft* (1887), he demonstrates a critical opinion about “modern” society and expresses regret at the loss of community.

into doubt. Extensive criticism of evolutionism resulted in its temporal oblivion in the 1950s. However, evolutionism was later revised (Sztompka, 1994).

Up until the present, neo-evolutionism continues to be an important approach to the study of social change. In contrast to evolutionists, who found the grounds for their theories in philosophy or history, neo-evolutionists try to substantiate their claims based on the results of a number of empirical disciplines that focus on social change. These disciplines include archeology, historiography, ethnology, and cultural anthropology. Two principal departures of neo-evolutionism from evolutionism have to be noted: 1) the main interest shifts from typological schemes of stages to the explanation of change; and, 2) the object is not the whole of human society; instead, cultures, tribes, nation-states, and civilizations become of interest (Sztompka, 1994). Despite these differences, the main objective of neo-evolutionism is the same as the objective of classical evolutionism, which can be formulated as “comprehending in one account the processes of social order and social change, which will show both the orderliness of change and the innate tendency of every order to undergo change” (Smith 1976, p. 45).

3.4 Modernization and Theories of Modernization

Before I further proceed with the discussion of theories and paradigms of social change, modernization has to be defined. Sztompka (1994) distinguishes three meanings of this term. The first one is general and simply means any kind of progressive change that takes place in society. Since this meaning is not specific enough, it is often substituted with a second meaning, which is more concrete in the historical sense. Here, modernization means a process of widespread change that leads to achieving Western modernity with all its distinguishable characteristics such as industrialization, democratization, and rationalization, among others. The third meaning of the concept is the most specific, as it is only related to so-called underdeveloped societies. This meaning describes the attempts of “developing” countries to catch up with Western “developed” countries characterized by a distinctive type of the modern (Sztompka, 1994) outlined in the beginning of the chapter.¹ Therefore, modernization can be equated to Westernization (Martinelli, 2005).

A group of theories of social change, such as theories of modernization, neo-modernization, and convergence theories, accept this last meaning of modernization. Classical

¹ See the analytical approach to Western modernity in the section called ‘Defining Modernity’.

modernization theories pay attention to the cleavage between the First and Third World, whereas theories of convergence concentrate on contrasting First and Second World countries (Sztompka, 1994). Since the focus of my work is on a country that is seen as belonging to the Third World, I will not discuss convergence theories here.

I chose to consider modernization theories not only because they deal with First and Third World countries and have a direct relation to the subject of my work, but also because these theories, especially in their classical form, are the continuation of the evolutionist orientation (Sztompka, 1994). Modernization theories suggest that: 1) changes are unilinear; therefore, so-called developing countries are going to follow the same development path that “more developed” countries pursued in the past; 2) changes are irreversible; “developing” countries will inevitably become “modern”; 3) stages through which every society goes cannot be omitted; instead, each society moves from one regular stage to another; 4) progressivism of development; modernization theories assume that modernization leads to the overall improvement of social life (Sztompka, 1994); and 5) “modern” and “non-modern” have to be analyzed by looking at changes in the structure of economic and social relationships and changes in individual orientations (Portes, 1973).

Even though modernization theories are similar to evolutionary theories, there are two fundamental differences between them. Modernization theories suggest that modernization has to be launched and managed “from above” by political elites that have to destroy the barriers to modernization, which protect “traditional” ways of life, institutions, and organizational structures. In contrast, evolutionary theories see modernization as an autonomous and spontaneous process, which happens “from below”. Another distinction is that modernization theories set an example of Western societies as an ideal that has to be achieved. On the contrary, classical evolutionary theories do not usually specify any particular country as a better society. This difference leads to a shift in focus of modernizing efforts. In modernization theories, these efforts are concentrated on copying the most advanced Western societies. Therefore, it is not simply a development in the abstract progressive direction (Sztompka, 1994).

Classical modernization theories were highly popular from the 1950s to mid-1960s. In the 1970s and up until the middle of the 1980s these theories were extensively criticized both on theoretical and empirical grounds, which resulted in the temporal decline of these theories. In case of empirical evidence, it was argued that the attempts to modernize did not lead to the

results modernization theories promised. Poverty and inequality continued to persist if not to increase, dictatorships were widespread, wars were persistent, and new forms of nationalism and fundamentalism arose. Another negative side effect produced by modernization included demolition of customary life styles and institutions, which often resulted in anomie, chaos, and social disorder (Sztompka, 1994). As for theoretical underpinnings, modernization theories came under strong criticism for the following reasons: 1) they had an ethnocentric bias; critics questioned the goals of modernization as Western-oriented (Eisenstadt, 1983); 2) they required the idea of change from one stage to another to be without the possibility of backward steps (Huntington, 1976); 3) they disregarded the importance of external factors that contribute to change or affect it (for instance, international trade or colonialism) (Tipps, 1976); 4) they did not take into account the probability of multilinear developments that proceed through various modernization paths instead of a single path (Sztompka, 1994); 5) they overlooked the complexity of the consequences of modernization (Martinelli, 2005); and 6) they promoted the deluded idea that “modernity” opposes customs and vice versa ignoring any advantages of “traditionalism” (Sztompka, 1994).

At the end of the 1980s, modernization revisionism emerged. Knobl (2002) and Bhambra (2007) explain the resurrection of modernization theories by the fall of the Soviet bloc and the economic rise of several Asian countries, commonly known as Asian tigers. Today, modernization theories continue to play an important role in such disciplines as sociology and beyond it. In particular, they find its application in ideology and practices of certain influential international organizations, such as the IMF and the World Bank (Mamdani, 1997). From the very beginning, the main goal of the IMF and the World Bank was to include Third World countries in the development project by means of loan provision (McMichael, 2005). This project has been based on the presupposition that all societies are moving along the same path as Western countries did in the past. Both the IMF and the World Bank adopted and often continue to use the “one-size-fits-all” approach that does not pay sufficient attention to the differences between societies or countries (Stiglitz, 2002). For example, the World Bank has been requiring the governments of the countries in need of financial aid to implement structural adjustment programs in exchange for loans. These programs generally overlook national political, economic, and social specificities, which leads to lasting and, in many cases, greater poverty and inequality among negative consequences.

3.5 Theories of Globalizing Modernity

In the beginning of the 1990s, a set of new theories that explain social change by focusing on globalization emerged (Featherstone & Lash, 1995). According to Robinson (2007), these theories were developed around five distinctive phenomena characterizing globalization, namely global political processes such as the diffusion of global governance and transnational institutions; global economic processes, which include international economic interconnectedness and new systems of consumption and production; transnational cultural patterns pertaining to the idea of “global culture”; transnational migration; and new forms of inequality and social hierarchies.

Globalization is a highly contested phenomenon. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that there is no consensus on what constitutes globalization. This also explains why globalization theories are so diverse. Here, I will only discuss one set of globalization theories that I find valuable for my work. I call these theories “theories of globalizing modernity”. These theories represent a continuation of modernization theories, for globalization is seen as the final product of the process of modernization occurring at the global level, whereas this modernization process has been theorized and analyzed by modernization theories at the level of the nation-state (Robinson, 2007). I will look in particular at the theory by Anthony Giddens because it is probably the most well-known and elaborate.¹

Giddens (1990) defines globalization as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (p. 64). The concept of globalization is characterized first and foremost by the universalization of Western modernity, which involves the universalization of the Western capitalist system of production and the universalization of the nation-state, among others (Giddens, 1990). Giddens argues that the condition of globalizing modernity is not simply about the spread of Western institutions around the world. It implies the production of new forms of interdependence. These new types of interdependence leave no room for the Others.¹ Giddens (1990) points out that instead of moving towards post-modernity, we are now in such a historical period in which the consequences of Western modernity are more universalized than ever before. Even though he does not explicitly specify the characteristics of the ideal type of Western

¹ For other theories of globalizing modernity see Meyer et al., 1997 and Boli & Thomas, 1999.

¹ By the Others I mean any social group in non-Western parts of the world.

modernity, his analysis of social change in the world demonstrates that he views Western modernity in the conventional way as characterized by a number of features described in the beginning of this chapter.

Giddens (1994) claims that Western modernity is uncontrollable and unavoidable and that everyone is a part of it. For Giddens, Western modernity is the end of time. In other words, the world cannot be more modern Western than it is now. In this world, there is almost no room for “traditions”. Giddens (1994) argues that in the age of high modernity and globalization, “traditions only persist in so far as they are made available to discursive justification” (p. 105) and if they have value in “a universe of plural competing values” (p. 100), or in the form of fundamentalism. The extinction of “traditions” marks a break not only with the previous historical periods, but also with distinctive cultures. A part of the problem is that Giddens views custom or, as he calls it, “tradition” as durable and invariable. He claims that “...if it is traditional, a belief or practice has an integrity and continuity which resists the buffeting of change” (p. 62). Giddens believes that “tradition” is inevitably destroyed by Western modernity, perhaps because of the opposite characteristics they have. If Western modernity, which is becoming globalized, controls time through the control of space, “tradition” controls space through the control of time (Giddens, 1994).

There are some other problems with the Giddens’ theory. For instance, it does not leave modernity open to interpretations. Since it is represented as a totality, all one can do is either defend it or reject it. At the same time, it becomes hard to conceive any alternative perspectives beyond these two choices (Kaya, 2004). In addition, the analysis of “tradition” and “modernity” in the Giddens’ theory is quite simplistic. He does not critically analyze “traditions” within the context of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial experiences. The theory seems completely detached from the perspectives and specificities of the non-Western world to the point that they become almost non-existent. In other words, Giddens does not address the question of what non-Western means in the world. For Giddens, the world is entirely modern Western (Robertson, 1992), and there are no multiple or separate centers of power. Therefore, Giddens’ theory of globalizing modernity repeats the inaccuracies of evolutionism and modernization theories, which, in essence, dismiss social, political, and economic realities in all societies but Western.

Schematically, the Giddens’ theory can be depicted as follows:

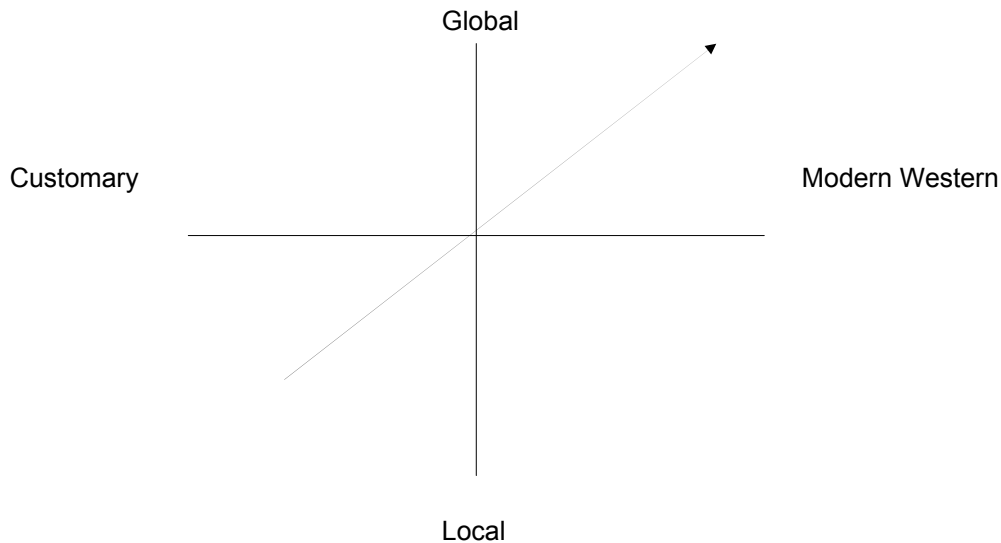


Figure 3.1 The Giddens' Theory of Globalizing Modernity

Over time, customs wither away as modern Western conditions become more and more widespread. At the same time, the local becomes less and less significant compared to the global. In other words, Western modernity expands in space and time substituting the local and the customary.

I suggest that evolutionism and modernization theories, both old and new, and theories of globalizing modernity do not adequately describe social change that has taken place around the world in the last two centuries. A paradigm of multiple or alternative modernities on the other hand helps provide a more accurate analysis that takes into account the perspectives of the Others.

3.6 The Paradigm of Multiple Modernities

The paradigm of multiple or alternative modernities, which has not reached a status of a theory yet, was developed in the beginning of the 1990s as a result of a renewed discussion about modernity and the nature of the modern in the light of fundamental changes on the global scale, which were primarily the collapse of the Soviet Union and a growing role of globalization (Eisenstadt & Schluchter, 1998). Eisenstadt was the first scholar to propose the idea of multiple modernities.

The paradigm of alternative modernities acknowledges Western modernity, which

originated in Western Europe to be a starting point of the analysis (Bhambra, 2007). As the elements of this modernity, such as a nation-state, liberal market, and Western education, were adapted across the globe as ideas, and in some cases also as realities, due to colonialism and economic and military imperialism, various modernities were formed (Wittrock, 2000). However, this does not imply that specificities characterizing various non-Western societies were going to dissipate over time. What instead it means is that these societies inevitably referred and adapted to spreading Western practices and ideas without losing their distinctive identities, which were changing and reinterpreted as well. These processes also continue today. Dirlik (2003) argues that alternative modernities partly renewed and reinforced as the continuous interpretation of various types of identities characterizing each modernity have been taking note of the globalizing condition of the Western modernity (Wittrock, 2000).

Eisenstadt and Schluchter (1998) argue that the expansion of Western modernity and growing interconnectedness in the world should not be seen as a process of repetition. Instead, it is the “crystallization of new civilizations”. These civilizations are characterized by their unique dynamics and heterogeneity. As a result, the paradigm of multiple modernities provincializes Western modernity by questioning its universalistic claims (Gaunkar, 2001). Eisenstadt (2000) debunks globalization processes by saying that they neither represent the “end of history” as the end of ideological fractions between various programs of modernity in the process of convergence, nor a “clash of civilizations”, which implies a confrontation between the Western and those societies that reject the program of Western modernity. Instead the processes of globalization explicitly demonstrate the continuous reinterpretation of the program of modernity, which results in the construction of alternative modernities (Eisenstadt, 2000).

Social, political, economic and other types of dynamics observed in non-Western countries are modern in spite of the fact that they are significantly affected by distinctive historical experiences (Eisenstadt, 1997). Therefore, modernity is an “endless trial” (Eisenstadt 1999). Charles Taylor (2004) proposes that societies or civilizations will never converge since new differences will always be emerging from the old. Moreover, patterns can become even more divergent and differentiated as the global processes intensify (Appadurai, 1996).

In most of his works, Eisenstadt talks about the development of unique cultural codes in various societies. However, in one study he also adds another important aspect, which is of specificities at the institutional level that persist through times (Eisenstadt & Schluchter, 1998).

Therefore, within the context of the paradigm of multiple modernities, modernity is seen as both a cultural program characterized by contradictions and liability to contestations (Eisenstadt, 2000) and as institutional constellations (Eisenstadt & Schluchter, 1998).

Eisenstadt and Schluchter (1998) believe that multiple modernities have been formed as a result of the constant interplay between the cultural codes and institutions (including political and social institutions) existent in each particular society and their exposure and reaction to coming external and internal challenges, which include social, political, cultural and other types of challenges. The differentiation of the two aspects of modernity (cultural and institutional) allows, according to Bhambra (2007), to see variabilities and commonalities among multiple modernities. It also helps observe differences between institutional and cultural processes within a particular society characterized by a distinctive modernity and premises of Western modernity existent in that society (Eisenstadt, 2001).

As the way the program of Western modernity has been appropriated varies from one society to the other, deviances can be measured against the ideal type of Western modernity in order to distinguish varieties found in other societies or civilizations. However, in the opinion of Eisenstadt and Schluchter (1998), these civilizational distinctions have to be analyzed on their own terms as well, and not simply in comparison to the West.¹

The conception of multiple modernities has been increasingly used in the disciplines of cultural studies and anthropology. The examples of empirical anthropological and cultural research on alternative modernity in Africa include the works by Comaroff and Comaroff (1997), Piot (1999), and Hassan (2010). In empirical sociological, political science, and gender research, the paradigm of multiple modernities has not been extensively employed. Yet, it has several important advantages when used to analyze social change from the sociological, gender and political science perspectives. First, the paradigm provides an opportunity to critically assess and compare changes in social and political (including gendered) behaviour patterns, roles and values, as well as transformations in social and political institutions on global, regional, and national scales. In addition, this paradigm gives a chance to non-Western elites and intellectuals to find new possibilities of situating their unique experiences within a global context and at the same time not to abandon the concept of modernity as such (Kocka, 2002). I also find this

¹ It will be shown that the paradigm of multiple modernities allows comparing modernities that exist in various societies, and not just the ideal type of the Western modern against particular modernity.

approach more sensitive to the current condition of social and political spheres in various countries, regions or civilizations as it bears a potentiality of building connections and understanding across societies. In addition, the paradigm of multiple modernities implies the existence of alternative centers of power, rationality, and culture (Kaya, 2004); and in a broader context, it allows the exploration of entanglements and mutual effects across societies or civilizations (Kocka, 2002).

The paradigm of multiple modernities has been mostly subjected to criticism for emphasizing differences between various societies allegedly without paying due attention to their interconnections (Bhambra, 2007). In particular, globalists claim that variations among societies are not large enough to justify the concept of multiple modernities and that the role of the global is much more significant than the one of specificities. It is evident, however, that with the prevailing role of globalization theories stressing Western-based homogeneity or hegemony of Western modernity across the globe and modernization theories triumphing over an alleged convergence of all societies, we need a paradigm that would emphasize peculiarities that are reflected in contradictory or, on the opposite, harmonious relationships between Western and non-Western elements within each particular society. In addition, the paradigm of alternative modernities does not deny the interconnectedness of various parts of the world. After all, it is grounded on the presupposition that Western modernity affects in one way or the other non-Western societies. What the paradigm of multiple modernities does not agree with, however, is that the world is becoming the same (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1993).

A significant difference between the paradigm of alternative modernities on the one hand and theories of globalizing modernity and evolutionary and modernization theories on the other hand is that the former rejects the idea of a unilinear path that all societies are going to follow and does not see Western modernity as a totality. In other words, the paradigm of alternative modernities implies a localization of social change within a particular space and time in contrast to the above-mentioned theories that deny it. The advantage of the paradigm of alternative modernities compared to evolutionism, modernization theories and theories of the globalizing modernity is that it truly engages the non-Western with the Western and the effects of the functioning of various types of institutions with cultural specificities. That is to say, the paradigm presents the processes associated with the Western, the non-Western, institutional structures, and culture as complementary and thus encourages analyzing them in the relationship to each other

(Knauft, 2002).

What also sets apart the paradigm of multiple modernities is that the alternatively modern is presumed to be “the social and discursive space in which the relationship between modernity and tradition is configured” (Knauft 2002, p. 25). However, I go even further than that and suggest that not only does the paradigm of multiple modernities enable us to move away from a simplistic dichotomy of “traditional” and “modern”, it also provides an opportunity to redefine the modern, the customary, and the tradition that is invented. The conceptual framework that I use to answer the research question formulated as “What can the paradigm of multiple modernities add to our understanding of social change in Namibia from the interdisciplinary perspective when applied to the case of political behaviour and views on politics of Namibian university students in general and female and male students in comparison?” is a modified version of the framework proposed by Bruce M. Knauft (2002). He focuses on economy, not politics, and does not include invented traditions into the analysis:

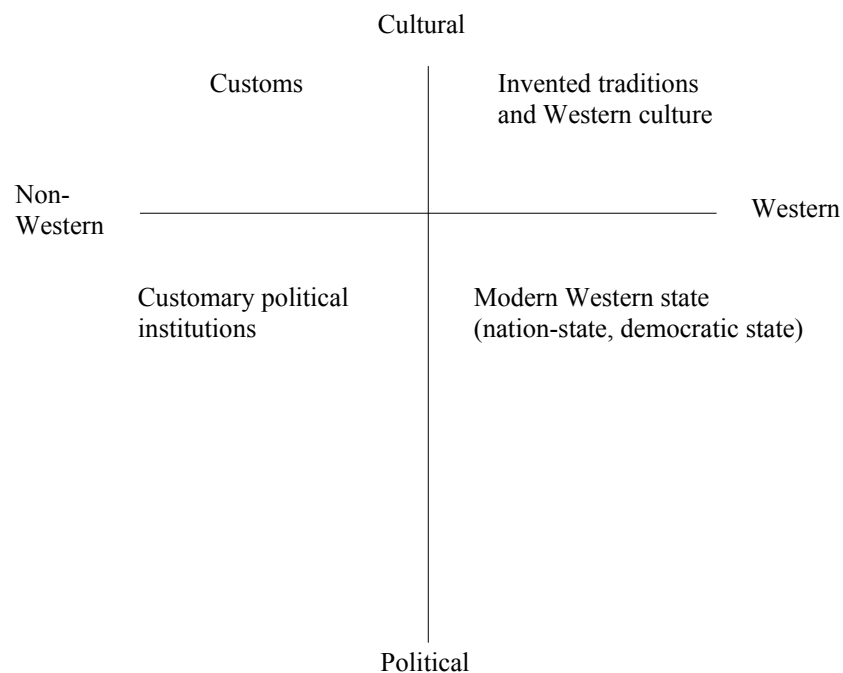


Figure 3.2 The Conceptual Framework

In this study, I look at customs as a non-Western phenomenon situated in the cultural realm versus invented traditions and Western culture as a whole. In addition, I take into

consideration customary political institutions (namely, “traditional leaders”) that more or less represent the non-Western condition and analyze them in relation to modern Western state structures (for instance, the Parliament and the institution of the presidency).

It is important to mention that I do not use any Western feminist theories in my work. It is primarily because the conception of women’s power in Africa is often based on the analysis of a changing role of women in various spheres due to external and internal conditions, including effects of the colonial rule on society and a political regime during the post-independence period (Mikell, 1997; Avoseh, n.d.; Adeleye-Fayemi, 2000), which are unique to the non-Western world. In addition, Africa has its own feminist culture not derived from the West. According to B. Adeleye-Fayemi (2000), women in Africa have always lived in societies that can be characterized as patriarchal, and have, as a result, always found ways of resisting patriarchy. This has included the use of religious authority, access to political power, and establishment of autonomous institutions. In contrast to most feminist theories that are heavily influenced by Western scholars, the paradigm of multiple modernities provides an opportunity to interpret women’s experiences in non-Western parts of the world by focusing on the change in gender roles without Western biases.

The analytical framework that I use in this work to address the research question is based on the following prerequisites: 1) the concept of modernity is not rejected; instead it is reconsidered. It is suggested to examine events that take place in Namibia, as well as in Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole and other world regions, through the lens of the paradigm of multiple or alternative modernities; 2) the idea of a totality of Western modernity as applied to the analysis of social change in non-Western parts of the world is questioned through the critical examination of evolutionary and modernization theories and theories of globalizing modernity and through the comparison of Namibian modernity to the ideal type of Western modernity; 3) a dichotomy of “modern” and “traditional” is reconsidered in the light of the phenomenon of invented traditions; and 4) the emphasis is on the complexity of social change in Namibia, which is reflected in social and political spheres.

By looking at the conceptual and analytical frameworks, it is important to define what customs and invented traditions are and how they differ. I will use these terms in a similar manner to that of Hobsbawm (1984) and Shils (1981). Hobsbawm (1984) defines invented traditions in a broad sense as “both “traditions” actually invented, constructed and formally

instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and dateable period...” (p. 1). He adds that invented tradition is “...a set of practices, normally governed by overly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (p. 1). Traditions are invented in response to new situations; old situations are taken as a reference point in this respect. Invented traditions can also create their own past through “quasi-obligatory repetition.” Hobsbawm (1984) argues that there is a fundamental difference between customs and invented traditions in that the latter are invariant, whereas the former are prone to change. Customs also serve a function of providing a desired change a symbolic meaning of natural law, social continuity, or the sanction of precedent. Custom is a characteristic feature of so-called traditional societies (Hobsbawm, 1984).

Shils (1981) also believes that customs or, as he calls them “traditions”, are volatile. Customs are characterized by the potential to be changed because “they are never good enough for some of those who have received them” (p. 213). In a simple sense, custom is “anything, which is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present” (p. 12) or from one generation to the next and is created through imagination, the intellectual process, and human actions. Custom includes practices and institutions, beliefs, material objects, and images of events and persons. Practices and institutions are formed due to the patterns of human actions and the beliefs that regulate, advocate, prohibit, or demand the reproduction of those patterns. As for a custom of beliefs with respect to politics and society, this can include beliefs about the rights and duties of a person, family, economic order, and the scope of activity of authorities, among others (Shils, 1981).

Traditions started being invented in Namibia, as well as in the rest of Africa, even before formal colonization began in the end of the 19th century. Missionaries were probably the most active in this process. However, with the advent of colonialism the invention of tradition noticeably intensified. Ranger (1984) points out that invented traditions helped redefine power relationships, which was crucial to the lasting of the colonial rule. Invented traditions were an ideological construct and a strategic source (Mamdani, 1997) since their intention was to justify colonial practices to the local population. Ranger (1984) argues that it is when colonizers thought that they respected African customs the most widespread inventions of tradition happened. Therefore, invented traditions were founded on fabricated and false affirmations about the

endurance of cultural practices (Gyeye, 1997). “Traditional” law, “traditional” political structures, and “traditional” rights related to land were invented through codification conducted by colonizers. And European stereotypes about African customs played a large role in this process (Ranger, 1984). To be sure, not all customs were distorted during the colonial era. Especially in the isolated areas of Sub-Saharan Africa, including some areas in Namibia, certain customs remained intact. However, without a doubt, the effect of invented traditions was so strong that it considerably changed social, political and economic relations in Namibia, as well as in other parts of the region of Sub-Saharan Africa.

It would be a mistake to say that Namibians and other Africans were always passive recipients of invented traditions. In certain situations, they manipulated invented traditions for their advantage. The invented tradition of a service of traditional leaders to colonizers was used by the former to re-emphasize their dominance over the youth in rural areas, and men at times resorted to invented tradition to reassure their control over women fearing a women's growing role in production in rural areas (Ranger, 1984).¹ In addition, apart from colonizers, some other social groups invented traditions during the colonial area. Among them were traditional leaders who were involved in codification of customary law. Traditions have continued being invented since independence most notably by new African leaders. In addition, as it will be shown in this work, some traditions invented during the colonial time have been continuously maintained.

Not only were traditions invented in Namibia, as well as in the rest of Africa, as a result of colonialism and pre-colonial encounters with Europeans, but also modern Western institutions and practices were installed either directly or indirectly in the country and other parts of the region.² Without a doubt, some elements of Western modernity existed in Africa, including Namibia, before formal colonization started, for instance, as a result of the missionaries that promoted Western education and Christianity, among others. However, with colonialism the adaptation of the elements of Western modernity significantly intensified. As a result of colonial

¹ See chapter five and chapter six for more information.

² There is a significant difference between the modern Western and invented traditions. Traditions are invented on purpose and, as a result, they have a utilitarian character. They also resort to customs to reinforce their legitimacy. The nature of the modern Western during colonialism was fundamentally different. It served the interests of colonizers but did not resort to customs. However, it formed a basis of invented traditions. For instance, the redefinition of a role of traditional leaders was an invented tradition based on the modern Western administrative style. Another example would be that the denial of formal equality to women formed an invented tradition, which rested on modern Western understanding of gender.

practices, a modern Western nation-state³ with its specific legal, administrative and representative institutions was installed and liberal market was promoted (Mamdani, 1997). In addition, urbanization, individualism, industrialization, and waged labour developed. To be sure, since the conditions under which modern Western institutions were established and modern Western practices and processes took place in Namibia, as well as in the rest of Africa, were substantially different from those in Europe, the form that they took also differed more or less from what was observed in Europe. I suggest that as a result of miscellaneous effects of colonialism, a distinctive modernity emerged in Namibia. This modernity was characterized by mutual connections between customs formed before the advent of the colonial rule, traditions invented by missionaries, colonizers and the new political elite after independence, and the modern Western condition. This distinctive modernity continues to exist today in the country, which will be demonstrated based on the analysis of two key themes as follows: the closure of the political sphere for students and youth in general versus an increasing role of women in the political sphere. Since I do not explore other Sub-Saharan countries in detail, I leave a question on whether an alternative modernity characterizes the Sub-Saharan region as a whole for future research.

Apart from the penetration of invented traditions and modern Western institutions, practices, and processes into the membrane of Namibian and other Sub-Saharan African societies during the colonial area, the reverse developments that are of various African influences on colonizers were also in places. In my work, I do not discuss the impact of encounters of colonizers with the local population on the former. Undoubtedly, it is an important issue. Nevertheless, we have to take into account the fact that this influence was much smaller than the influence of colonizers on African societies because of the practical disposition of power by the former.

3.7 Conclusion

To summarize the discussion, colonialism, which was an epitome of the Western modernity project, significantly affected social and political realities in Namibia and Sub-Saharan Africa in general and gave rise to hybridization of the modern Western, invented

³ The discussion of “nation” is out of scope of this work. See, for instance, Wittrock, 2000 for the insightful analysis of “nation” and “modernity” and Melber, 2010.

traditions, and customs, and, therefore, as I suggest, to an alternative modernity in Namibia. As it will be shown in my work, Namibian modernity is characterized by a number of distinctive elements that set it aside from the ideal type of Western modernity. In order to demonstrate this point, I will focus on two above-mentioned topics based on the conceptual and analytical frameworks provided in this chapter. I will draw a parallel between what has happened in Namibia based on the existing literature and the research I conducted and the state of affairs in Sub-Saharan Africa in general and will make an attempt to prove that theories of globalizing modernity, evolutionism, and modernization theories cannot adequately describe social change in Namibia and instead the paradigm of multiple modernities should be used. This paradigm provides an opportunity to show non-linearity and unpredictability of social change. It can also be used to explain why various countries and regions characterized by their own type of the modern have distinctive social and political structures. In the next chapter, I will discuss the Namibian historico-political context situated within the context of the region of Sub-Saharan Africa in order to demonstrate that Namibia has an alternative modernity.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE HISTORICO-POLITICAL CONTEXT: NAMIBIA AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

4.1 Introduction

Before I analyze the chosen themes, I will provide an overview of Sub-Saharan past and present political experiences and will particularly pay attention to what has been observed in Namibia prior to and after independence. This will help better understand why social change with respect to university students and women and their position in the political sphere has taken place in Namibia. As it will be shown in this and the following chapters, Namibia had overall similar colonial experiences as other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The country has also undergone social change since independence, which has been characteristic of the region starting from the end of the 1980s – the beginning of the 1990s. First, I will briefly describe political relations in Sub-Saharan Africa after independence. After that, I will consider the effects of German and South African colonialism and apartheid in Namibia. Then I will move on to the discussion of political practices of the ruling party, the state of opposition parties, and the role of legislative, executive and judicial branches of power. In addition, I will consider consultation and collaboration with the government as an example of participation of Namibians in politics and speculate on the type of regime that exists in the country.

4.2 Political Relations in Sub-Saharan Africa after Independence: an Overview

The colonizing state served as a model of political, social, and economic organization for many leaders who came to power as a result of liberation movements in Sub-Saharan Africa (Melber, 2010). However, the way the modern Western state was adopted differed significantly from the original. Most of newly elected governments constructed the political system based on face-to-face personalization and reciprocities (Hyden, 2006). Until the end of the 1980s, the majority of Sub-Saharan states¹ were characterized by authoritarianism, clientalism, and militarism with a little resemblance with the democratic nation-state, which developed in Europe after the World War I (Wittrock, 2000). In the last few years of the 1980s through the beginning of the 1990s, fundamental changes in the political realm took place across the Sub-Saharan region. Since the time of African countries' independence, it was the first widespread re-

¹ The exceptions were the Gambia, Senegal, Mauritius, and Zimbabwe.

definition of political power that touched upon all spheres of life. One-party and military regimes were forcefully overthrown or peacefully transformed into more liberal ones¹ (Bratton & Van de Valle, 1997). Political competition grew rapidly and many countries witnessed the establishment of multi-party systems. By 1994, all African countries became de jure multi-party (Wiseman, 1996). Governments provided formal guarantees of basic political liberties and adopted legal rules to limit the power and tenure of the executive. However, from 1994-1995, the reverse processes started taking place (Bratton & Van de Valle, 1997). As a result, democracy was not consolidated in most of Sub-Saharan Africa.

There is no unitary view on what constitutes the consolidation of democracy. For example, Larry Diamond (1999) argues that consolidation of democracy cannot occur unless all important political actors, both at the elite and popular levels, recognize that a democratic regime is better for their country than any other form of governance. Therefore, consolidation takes place through the legitimation of democratic values in public consciousness. Robert A. Dahl's perspective (1997) is similar to Diamond's, as he believes that consolidation is only possible with the emergence of democratic culture in the society. Conversely, Huntington (1991) argues that a double transfer of power through elections should take place before a country can be considered democratic. Therefore, it means that at least two strong political parties should exist in a country for it to become democratically consolidated (van Zyl & Keulder, 2001).

The reversal trend that took place between 1994 and 1995 is explained by the institutional characteristics of politics in the region that did not significantly change during the short liberation period of the 1980s and 1990s, and by persistent ethnic conflicts and socio-economic problems (Ottaway, 2003; Bratton & van de Walle, 1997). After 1994-1995, military regimes replaced formal democratic regimes in a number of Sub-Saharan countries. In other countries, formal democracy lasted longer but elected rulers started consolidating their personal power through political manipulations (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997). Today, most African countries can be called semiauthoritarian (Ottaway, 2003), or big-man democracies (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997). A semiauthoritarian regime combines formal democracy with informal neo-patrimonial practices in politics (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997). It is characterized by

¹ Benin set an example that a political leader could be peacefully changed through the people's expression of views (Bratton & Van de Valle, 1997).

presidentialism meaning that power is significantly centralized around the president, and by clientelism. All in all, politicians all across Sub-Saharan Africa operate within a political system based on patrimonial networks and personal rule only paying lip service to modern Western bureaucratic principles and institutions (Zack-Williams, 2004). In addition, African semi-authoritarian regimes are characterized by the prevalence of one dominant party and marginalized opposition parties that have insufficient resources and power. A semiauthoritarian regime does, however, leave space for public debate and for the functioning of independent press, political parties, and civil society organizations. However, as soon as these actors start exceeding the space allocated to them, the government takes measures to limit their activities (Ottaway, 2003). Elections in semiauthoritarian regimes can be formally free. Meanwhile, it is a regular practice for governments to harass opposition parties, to manipulate people's voices, and to organize electoral fraud. Governments also keep a monopoly on the radio. In addition, top members of the military and the executive branch of power are practically above the law, and the distinction between a ruling party and government is erased (van de Walle, 2003).

Namibia was the last country to gain independence in the region with exception of South Africa. Even though it did not go through social change observed in most Sub-Saharan countries from independence until the end of the 1980s, it experienced similar tendencies after 1990. It has gradually transformed from a democratic into de facto one-party state, which coincided with the anti-democratic transformations in other African countries. Before I describe these changes, a brief history of Namibia has to be provided.

4.3 The Namibian Historical Context

Before the arrival of Germans in the 19th century, the territory of current Namibia was occupied by various groups. In the North, the Ovambo people lived, whose agricultural systems were based on mixed farming. Centralized kingdoms were the most common form of social and political organization. To the east, the Kavango people, who was an Ovambo group living separately from the main group, resided. The region they lived in had higher rainfall. As a result, they experienced fewer challenges in terms of agricultural production than the Ovambo. To the east of Kavango, in the territory currently comprising Caprivi region, the Mafue, Masubia, and Lozi people lived, who were associated with the communities in Zambia (Emmett, 1999). In the central and southern areas, the Herero and Nama people dominated who were primarily

pastoralists due to the natural conditions of the areas that they occupied. These areas were appropriate only for raising livestock because of insufficient rainfall. Due to the pastoral activity, Hereros and Namas had decentralized political and social structures. There were two other groups that lived in central and southern areas, the Damara and San people. However, their population was significantly smaller than that of the Herero and Nama, and therefore they occupied limited areas and sometimes were subdued by the two prevailing groups (Emmet, 1999).

Overall, the colonization of Namibia was similar to colonization in other sub-Saharan countries. As in other parts of Africa, colonizers took over the land and resources, limited freedom of movement for natives, and forced them into labour to serve the interests of the colonial regime. In addition, customary institutions and practices were either transformed or destroyed to serve the interests of the colonial rule as in other societies across Sub-Saharan Africa (Soiri, 1996).¹

Namibia became a German colony in 1884. At first, the German's interest in Namibia was political rather than economic. Having a colonial possession increased the prestige of the country. It was only in the beginning of the 20th century with the discovery of copper, diamonds and other natural resources that economic interests were eventually enhanced (Soiri, 1996). Initially, Germans planned to occupy only 25% of the territories in central and southern Namibia (at that time, South West Africa). However, they continued to expropriate more and more land. The German Empire actively fostered Germans to move to Namibia and to set up ranches. By 1902 significant numbers of Germans were migrating, which resulted in the forced resettlement of Namibian ranchers (primarily Hereros) as whites were taking over the prime land. However, the first reserves were already created in the end of the 19th century. On paper, blacks were allowed to run their community affairs in the reserves. In practice, only a few parts of the organizational system of Namibian societies, which were considered useful by Germans and later on by South Africans, were able to function with some degree of autonomy. Reserves were hit by poverty as soon as they were established because they were situated in the least fertile and therefore most economically disadvantaged areas. In addition, the reserves were overcrowded (Sparks & Green, 1992).

¹ This will be considered in more detail in the following chapter.

The German administration established a strident rule maintained through the use of a paramilitary force (Bley, 1971). German aggressive expropriation of land in southern and central Namibia resulted in wars between the colonizers and the Herero and Nama, which lasted between 1904 and 1907. These wars ended up with the genocide of these two groups. Approximately 80% of the Hereros and 50% of the Namas were killed (Emmet, 1999). Germans did not stop there. They expropriated livestock and land of all the people who took part in the uprisings against the colonial rule. And in the next several years they secured forced labour in the colony (Emmet, 1999) by first establishing the Labour Code in 1907. It was because of the genocide of Herero and Nama people that Germans started recruiting workers from the North (primarily the Ovambo and Kavango) (Leys & Saul, 1995). However, northern areas were still left out of the exercise of the direct rule (Soiri, 1996).

During World War I, South Africa and other allied countries invaded Namibia. As a result, Germans were expelled. In 1920, the League of Nations granted a mandate to administer South West Africa to South Africa (Cliffe, 1994). As South Africans occupied South West Africa, the distribution of the population, which was introduced by Germans, was sustained. In addition, South Africans started exploiting local population even more to meet the interests of the South African state and economy. During the South African rule, the control continued to be extensively direct in central and southern parts of Namibia. In the North, it was relatively loose in the first four decades. However, freedom of movement of people in the North was limited and many of them were forced to become labourers in mines and in fishing and other industries (Bauer & Taylor, 2005). The system of segregation installed by Germans intensified under South African rule. Whites living in South West Africa could obtain South African citizenship, vote and be represented in the Parliament in South Africa. Needless to say, the black population had no opportunity to participate in self-government or to choose their leadership (Sparks & Green, 1992). Racial segregation was also visible in the establishment of townships exclusively for blacks and, in contrast, for persons of mixed race, who usually had more rights and higher wages and who did not depend on subsistence agriculture residing predominantly in urban areas (Bauer & Taylor, 2005).

In the period between the two world wars, South Africa set up native reserves and commissioners all across Namibia, including the areas that were not under the direct rule by Germans. In addition, the South African administration vigorously encouraged settlers from

South Africa to move to South West Africa for farming, and the legislation that was aimed at regulating migrant labour system for the development of commercial farms, mines, and urban sector was introduced (Bauer & Taylor, 2005). In 1946, the status of South West Africa changed as the United Nations was created and the League of Nations was dissolved. Despite South African government's protests, South West Africa became a UN trust territory. Even though the UN called the occupation of South West Africa illegal, South African government did not accept the UN trusteeship responsibility for South West Africa (Fraenkel & Murray, 1985) and made South West Africa de facto a province of South Africa. This meant the extension of apartheid to South West Africa (Sparks & Green, 1992).

The actions of South Africa met strong opposition from the Namibian population. Beginning in the 1940s, several traditional leaders began to petition the UN to end the South African oppression. Later on, they were joined by prominent activists of a nationalist movement that started in the end of the 1950s in Cape Town among Namibian contract migrant workers and then among migrant workers in Windhoek who established the Ovamboland People's Organization (OPO) headed by Sam Nujoma, the first future President of independent Namibia. OPO was found in 1959 and was renamed the next year into the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO). In 1962, SWAPO decided to start a military campaign first by training future fighters. It was not before 1966, however, when the actual armed struggle began (Bauer & Taylor, 2005). The South African government responded by putting constraints on the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), the SWAPO military wing, including the use of harsh laws such as the Terrorism Act of 1966, which was employed against freedom fighters in order to dissipate the movement for liberation (Maseko, 1995). Due to oppressive actions of South African authorities, which included detentions, torturing, and killings, tensions between two parties continued to increase (Bauer & Taylor, 2005).

In the early 1970s, northern Namibia turned into a war zone. When the borders with Angola opened up, SWAPO established their bases there, which resulted in a higher number of cross-border attacks by SWAPO combatants. Starting in 1975, South African Defense Force (SADF) troops began to involve in the armed conflict. Martial law was announced in the north of the country and emergency regulations were prescribed in Ovamboland, Kavango and Caprivi. SADF tried to re-establish order by recruiting volunteers in the north for military units to fight SWAPO combats. Another measure to address the conflict was the establishment of an interim

government by South Africans in 1980. This government was disbanded just three years later primarily because of corruption charges. In 1985, the South African government took another attempt to create this time a transitional government of national unity. It endured until 1989 when the transition to independence, which was monitored and sanctioned by the international community, began. During this period, thousands of former Namibian exiles all across the globe came back to the country. In November of 1989, the elections supervised by the UN were held with the purpose to draft a new constitution. On March 21, 1990 Namibia, being the last colony in Sub-Saharan Africa, finally became independent (Bauer & Taylor, 2005). Overall, Namibian independence was the product of both internal and external factors. Among external ones were the collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent loss of interest in backing up South Africa by Great Britain and USA to counteract socialist-oriented Angola, as well as active assistance of the United Nations and other international organizations during the transitional period (Soiri, 1996). The most important among internal factors was vigorous resistance of the population against the apartheid rule.

4.4 Democracy: What Kind of Regime Does Namibia Have?

Bratton and van de Walle (1997) believe that Namibia, at the time of independence, was in a better position than any other African country to accomplish successful transition to democracy due to the fact that there was an “elite pact” in place. The concept “elite pact” pertains to the process when moderate members of the opposition and the government try to find common ground by means of negotiations. According to Bratton and van de Walle (1997), this negotiation process took place because Namibia was a settler oligarchy at the time of transition. One of the features of this settler oligarchy was that the elites institutionalized political competition even though participation was low. Another feature was that colonists had a functioning democracy, which was enjoyed by them exclusively. In addition, settlers in Namibia had some freedom of the press, the independent court, opposition, which was loyal, and elections. However, elected representatives had limited authority acting like advisors or being in charge of small areas. White Namibians also could not choose the executive, which was instead appointed in South Africa (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997). In their book, Bratton and van de Walle (1997) are optimistic about Namibia avoiding the risks associated with maintaining the democratic rule encountered in other African states. However, some other authors think that

when a country goes through the struggle for liberation and not for democracy, the chances of maintaining democracy in the country are not good (see, for instance, Bauer, 1999). According to H. Melber (2002), the struggle for liberation was seen and perceived by Namibian people primarily as the right for their self-determination based on free and fair elections. As a result, the main goal was decolonization and not democratization.¹ Colin Leys and John Saul (1995) argue that any liberation struggle, especially an armed one, cannot avoid undemocratic practices. According to these authors, resistance movements against totalitarian regimes are often organized in agreement with hierarchical and authoritarian principles. Otherwise, these movements can hardly have any prospect of success. Persistence of undemocratic principles and practices during the liberation struggle can lead to their preservation after independence (Leys & Saul, 1995).

Hundreds of definitions for the word “democracy” exist. In my work, the term “democracy” will refer to both electoral and liberal or representative types of democracy. In electoral democracies citizens are “controllers” rather than “participants” as they place checks on politicians at the time of election (Parry & Moyser, 1984). Without a doubt, people can still exercise political power and this activity can be effective, although it is limited to voting without any possibility of governing (Schumpeter, 1943). In this case, citizens’ influence on government decision-making is indirect. In an electoral democracy, free and fair elections are guaranteed, as are political rights such as freedom of press and speech and the right to assembly (Diamond, 1999). The problem with this kind of regime lies in the fact that the system is based on the delegation of authority to political leaders who are assumed to have wisdom and necessary skills, while citizens are mostly passive and not sufficiently involved in politics (Walker, 1966).

What characterizes liberal or representative democracy is the horizontal accountability of public officials to one another; this is in contrast to electoral democracy, which requires only vertical accountability of those in power to the citizens (O’Donnell, 1994; Diamond, 1999). Apart from the guarantee and implementation of political, civic, individual and collective rights in liberal democracies, there is also civilian control over the military and true rule of law. Citizens have an opportunity to participate in political life not only during election time²

¹ However, in the official political rhetoric, it is seen as both the transition to freedom and democracy (see, for example, Geingob, 1995).

² To encompass both types of democracy, I will look at various types of political participation in my work. In addition to voting, I will analyze students’ participation in authorized demonstrations,

(Diamond, 1999). The governmental position in this kind of regime is to provide opportunities to people to exercise their sovereignty and to communicate their views (Parry, Moyser, & Day, 1992). Welzel and Inglehart (2008) claim that the notion of liberal democracy is “inspired by a worldview that considers a life based on freedom, equality, a self-governance as the best way of organizing societies” (p. 1). However, liberal democracy should not be idealized because the interests of people can hardly be met in each and every government decision. Yet citizens are expected to have an opportunity to participate in decision-making and at least some of their input should be implemented for the country to be called representative democracy.

Since electoral and liberal democracies are ideal types, there are some countries that may incorporate the characteristics of both of them at one time or other. There are also countries that cannot be called either a liberal or electoral democracy but that imitate democratic practices. These countries are pseudodemocracies¹ and their distinguishable features are that the ruling party cannot be practically overthrown and that a fair arena of political contestation is virtually non-existent. What differentiates pseudodemocracies from authoritarian or nondemocratic regimes is that they allow opposition parties to be active to some extent (Diamond, 1999).

According to the official government view, Namibia is a country that is ruled by the people and for the people, and the government aims to make it a true citizen-based democracy (Tjitendero, 2002). Thus, in theory, the government holds responsibility for the protection of human rights, people’s empowerment, and participatory politics. However, what we see in practice is somewhat different. Freedom of assembly, of speech, and of the press exists in the country but is sometimes violated. In addition, there is a judiciary that intends to guarantee the rule of law. However, in few cases, legal rules have not been applied fairly, that is irrespective of the status of a particular person.² There is limited horizontal accountability in the country even though Namibians can and do participate in political matters beyond elections, for instance, through public hearings, demonstrations, and communicating with public officials. Therefore,

marches or rallies; persuading others how to vote; contacting or writing to officials about individual/local/regional/national problem(s); working with others in a community to solve community problem(s); writing a letter or expressing a viewpoint on political issue(s) to a journal or a newspaper; consulting officials (regional, national, local) on public issue(s); and collaborating with officials on solving public issue(s) (See questions 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4 in Appendix 2).

¹ The notion of pseudodemocracy is similar to a semi-authoritarian regime or big-man democracy described earlier in this chapter.

² Cases of SWAPO members detained by the organization during the liberation struggle and corruption cases that involve top-ranking politicians are the most vivid examples accounting for it.

Namibia can be classified as a mixed regime. However, if we take for granted a definition of electoral democracy as a process of acquiring power of political decision-making by elites through the competitive struggle for the people's "vote" (Davidson, 1991), Namibia can hardly be called even an electoral democracy. Due to insufficient resources opposition parties have, the role attributed to the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) as the main actor in the liberation struggle and other factors, which will be described later in this chapter, a campaign for the votes of the people is not fairly competitive. In addition, one of the features of electoral democracy – a peaceful change of power (Southall, 2003) - has not taken place so far and is unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future. In order to better understand Namibian political practices, the activities of SWAPO over the years will be considered first.

4.5 SWAPO's Political Activity Before and After Independence

As it was mentioned earlier, Namibia was under colonial rule for more than a hundred years, occupied first by Germans in 1884 and later, in 1920, by South Africans. Several political organizations attempted to unite Namibians to overthrow South African regime. SWAPO became the most authoritative organization among them. In 1966, it initiated an armed struggle that spread through Northern Namibia. Many of its members were forced to leave Namibia in the following years. However, these members continued campaigning against the oppressor while living in neighbouring countries. As a result, SWAPO became the most prominent representative of the liberation movement outside the country (Williams, 2004). Within its ranks in exile, there was widespread suppression of democratic practices and critical views of the organization (Saunders, 1994). As Diescho (1996) explains, the desire to overthrow the South African regime was so legitimate and overwhelming that a total agreement among those who opposed was expected.

Extensive evidence exists that SWAPO tortured, detained, starved, and killed hundreds of its own members who were alleged spies or alleged supporters of the colonial rule. These illegal activities took place in the 1970s and 1980s while SWAPO was operating out of Angola and Zambia (Leys & Saul, 1995). After Namibia's independence, SWAPO continuously refused to account for what it did in exile, claiming that digging into history only stirs up ethnic tensions and destabilizes a political situation in the country (Saul & Leys, 2003). According to Hans-Erik Staby (1992), SWAPO persistently voted for unilateral acquisition of power after Namibia

gained independence. Only due to long negotiations with the “Contact Group,” which was comprised of the FRG, UK, Canada, France and the USA, did SWAPO finally agree to have free and fair elections and a multi-party system in the country. This agreement was more so enforced on SWAPO leadership than advocated by it (Davidson, 1991).

Christopher Tapscott (1999) argues that SWAPO leaders believe that the political power the party gained was a logical result of the armed struggle and not the result of the people’s vote. This affects the way these leaders see democracy. For them, it has a utilitarian character and serves as the means to prolong their power, which is done through national and regional elections. In 1989, SWAPO received 57.3% of votes. As a result of the 1994 national election, the party received two thirds of seats in the Parliament because 72.7% of the population voted for it. The overwhelming support for SWAPO has been a persistent trend since that time. What it has caused is that over the last two decades the country has gradually transformed from a democratic state with one dominant party into a one-party state.

Since 1994-1995, a non-democratic rhetoric, used by those in power against the people who criticize the government, the president, or the ruling party, has been increasing. Political actions and speeches that do not approve of the ruling party and the government are often called by the country’s leadership “unpatriotic” or “anti-national” (Graham, 2001). Melber (2002) suggests that turning a blind eye towards the criticism and opposition views prevents the government from reforming the political system. Indeed, governmental institutions and the political system in general are becoming increasingly inflexible, which has negatively affected and continues to affect social and economic spheres. SWAPO’s leadership is also at times intolerant towards criticism coming from the international community. One of the most provocative examples is the statement of Sam Nujoma, former Namibian president, in which he referred to then-newly appointed Prime Minister and Foreign Minister: “I told them off. We are tired of insults (from) those people. I told them they can keep their money...that those political good governance, human rights, lesbians, etc., that they want to impose on our culture, they must keep those things in Europe” (cited in Melber, 2003, p. 23).

More and more Namibian political officials are judged not on the basis of the work they are doing but on loyalty to the ruling party. Even traditional leaders are expected to be loyal to SWAPO and discouraged from any affiliation with other political parties. Thus, what we see is the conflated identification of the loyalty to the country with the loyalty to SWAPO. In other

words, those who do not support the ruling party are accused of not wanting their country to be prosperous (Davidson, 1994). The situation is exacerbated due to the insufficient control of the executive by the legislative branch.

4.6 The Role of Legislative, Executive, and Judicial Branches of Government¹

The system of checks and balances is elaborated in the Namibian Constitution, according to which the activity of the president and the cabinet is controlled by the judiciary and the Parliament. However, from the discussion thus far of the SWAPO's role in the political sphere, the conclusion can be drawn that the executive de facto possesses enormous power. According to the journalist Fabian Spengler (*Informante* 09.03.09), who was present at one of local meetings of the ruling party held in 2009, one of the speakers and South West Africa People's Organization Party Youth League (SPYL) members, Clinton Swartbooi, said that "Parliament is only an unimportant institution, it doesn't have any power. Everyone knows that the party has the power." The ruling party has had, as it was noted earlier, two thirds of seats in the Parliament for the last fifteen years, which has resulted in the legislative branch lacking definitive authority as legislations brought forward by SWAPO members of Parliament are usually passed automatically without thorough debate. What is noticeable is that members of the lower house, the National Assembly, are not accountable to constituents because they are not elected by them. Instead, each political party comes up with a list of candidates for Parliament seats. The higher the name is placed on the list, the higher the chance to win a seat (Bauer & Taylor, 2005). As Keulder (2002) argues, this makes the autonomy of the Parliament doubtful and limits the possibility to question political decisions of the executive. In addition, this makes the National Assembly isolated from citizens since its members represent the interests of their parties and not the interests of regions or localities. Thus, the possibility of the implementation of public input in practice is questionable. That stated, even though the National Assembly does not fulfill the function of overseeing the executive, some Parliament committees, such as the Public Accounts Committee, make effective efforts to bring certain issues to the attention of members of Parliament and the Namibian public (Lindeke, Kaapama & Blaauw, 2007).

¹ See Appendix 1 for the flow chart showing the relationships of the Namibian constitutional bodies to one another.

SWAPO was initially against the establishment of the National Council, the upper chamber of the Parliament, and agreed to it on the condition that the National Council could only review legislation passed by the National Assembly without having the right of veto. One of SWAPO's real reasons to disapprove of the chamber was that the National Council is based on popular support in constituencies, and not on political parties, as is the case with the National Assembly (Bauer, 1999). The committees of the National Council receive written and oral submissions from citizens. To improve contacts between officials and the public, all members of the National Council have offices in their constituencies, which makes it easy for people to contact their elected representatives (Nehova, 2002). However, since the upper chamber cannot write and adopt legislation, this kind of practice cannot translate into policies. Undoubtedly, today, only the judicial branch of power, which continues to be relatively free, has the capacity to question the practices of the executive. This stands in contrast to the position and capacities of opposition parties.

4.7 Opposition Parties

In Namibian languages, to oppose means something close to persistent disagreement with a certain degree of hostility. In addition, there is no analogous word for "opposition" in Namibian languages (Diescho, 1996). That is why the view "you are either with an enemy or with us" is prevalent in governmental rhetoric (Melber, 2003). When the Congress of Democrats (CoD) emerged mostly comprised of discontented SWAPO members, SWAPO organized a campaign against it. In addition, the ruling party did everything so that the CoD would not get a status of "official opposition" in Parliament (Bauer & Taylor, 2005). When the Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP) was established in 2007, the story repeated. SWAPO has been continuously criticizing this party, calling its members betrayers since once again the majority of them are disgruntled former SWAPO members.

Although SWAPO has been ceaselessly trying to incorporate the members of different ethnic groups into the party, it still continues to be viewed generally as the Ovambo's majority party.¹ People from minority ethnic groups frequently support parties composed of the members

¹ Namibia's population consists of a large number of ethnic groups. Ovambos comprise slightly more than 50% of the population; 9% are Kavangos; 7% of the population are Hereros; 7% of the population are Damaras; 6.5% of the population are mixed; 6% are white; Namas comprise 5% of the

of their group. For example, Herero people often vote for the National Unity Democratic Organisation of Namibia (NUDO). However, what has been taking place is that non-Ovambo localities started claiming its allegiance with SWAPO in order to get financial aid and other resources (Davidson, 1994). According to Christopher Tapscott (1999), SWAPO, as well as other parties that gained power not as a result of popular vote but because of armed struggle for independence, often believe that opposition parties are dispensable for the democratic regime to be sustained. One of the things SWAPO has been practicing from time to time is co-opting opposition leaders into government positions, where they have had no choice but to become representatives of the interests of the ruling party (Diescho, 1996). These are some of the reasons why the support for opposition parties has been low in the country since independence. Other reasons include lack of financial resources and access to popular mass media (du Pisani & Lindeke, 2009). Despite all the existing hindrances with respect to the realization of democratic principles, Namibians take part in politics, although their participation can be relatively limited.

4.8 Political Participation in Namibia: Consulting and Collaborating with the Government

In this section, I pay attention particularly to two types of political participation: consulting government officials regarding a certain issue and collaborating with the government in order to solve a problem. I chose to focus on these two types of participation because they are often dismissed while discussing political activity of people in Sub-Saharan Africa in general and in Namibia in particular. However, as it was noted in one of the previous sections, a country cannot be called a liberal democracy if practices of consultation and collaboration with the public do not take place on a large scale.

The right to political participation is guaranteed by the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. In the Article 13(1), it is stated that "Every citizen shall have the right to participate freely in the government of his country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives in accordance with the provisions of the law." In the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, political activity is considered not only as the right to vote but also as "the right to participate in peaceful political activity intended to influence the composition and politics of the Government," "the right to form and join political parties," and the right "to participate in the

population; 4% are Caprivians; Bushmen comprise 3% and Basters comprise 2%. There are also other minority groups, such as the Tswana, which constitute less than 1% of the total population (CIA, 2008).

conduct of public affairs, whether directly or through freely chosen representatives” (Constitution, article 17(1)).

The government has acknowledged numerous times the need for active participation of the public in political matters (see, for example, Civic Organisations Partnership Policy, 2005; Gowases, 1997). Since independence, there have been regular public hearings on draft bills organized by Parliament committees, which were held country-wide with the involvement of a lot of people. However, according to one of the researchers in the Institute for Public Policy Research (Windhoek, Namibia) with whom I had an informal discussion, usually only a few recommendations from the general public make it into policies. In other words, although people have a right to voice their opinion, it is often not heard or ignored, and most of the decisions are made behind closed doors. Another problem is that due to the low population density and a large size of the country, public hearings take place only in large regional centers. It also seems that citizens are allowed to give advice on governmental matters by means of public hearings but not to challenge or criticize the government. Staby (1992) even argues that many Namibians are reluctant to share their views because they do not want to create tensions with political leaders and be called disloyal.

In October 2000, the National Conference was organized. Its aim was to analyze the character of political participation in Namibian regions and to develop mechanisms to increase the level of participation at the regional and national levels. One participant from the Oshana region complained that there was no sense in attending public hearings; officials did not listen carefully to what people had to say, as elected representatives had a lack of time or could not address people’s concerns or answer questions without consulting experts. “In the end it becomes the wishes of the people against those of the experts and consultants, yet these consultants are not accountable to the people” (Towards increased and informed public participation in the legislative process, 2002, p. 12). Some participants remarked that even if public hearings were deliberative and fruitful in their opinions, final decisions did not reflect people’s proposals and views. Instead, it was the recommendations of consultants and experts that were taken into account. The participants also said that sometimes people did not want to take part or did not attend the hearings for a variety of reasons such as the timing of these hearings, insufficient information on these events, or limited access to parliamentary information. Another hindrance

could be the legal nature of the language used in draft legislations, which is difficult for most people to understand. Despite these difficulties, it was found during the conference that Namibians are interested in participation in public hearings generally in all the regions (Towards increased and informed..., 2002).

In 2001, the National Democratic Institute conducted research to find out what opinions and views Namibians had about democratic institutions in the country. Overall, 20 focus groups were held in five regions. During many of these group discussions, participants from different backgrounds and parts of the country complained that their voices were not heard. At the same time, they believed that they had sufficient knowledge and understood the problems at times better than did government representatives or experts that were assigned to solve problems. The reason for this confidence lay in participants' personal encounters with the problems. Participants in all focus group expressed a wish to be involved in decision-making at the national, regional, and/or community level. A lack of information on politics and state institutions was not an issue. What was of concern was access to participation in public hearings. Some participants who said that they had access acknowledged that their opinions were either not taken into account in the final solution or were not considered at all (Kandetu, Ndjoze-Ojo, Mijiga & Nampila, 2001).

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the historical political context and current situation in Sub-Saharan Africa in general and in Namibia in particular that is important to consider before elaborating on more specific topics. As it can be observed from the literature discussed above, German and South African occupation tremendously affected social, political and economic life of Namibians as was the case elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa with respect to the colonial rule. As the country became independent, the hopes of democratization gradually dissipated. Anti-democratic tendencies started taking place in Namibia at the same time as it happened in other countries in the region. It was shown that with relatively weak checks and balances and high support of the population during elections, the feeling of permissiveness of SWAPO has been growing. This has resulted in increasingly intolerant and non-democratic political culture in the country visible in the intimidation of opposition parties and inflexibility of the regime. As it can also be seen from the discussion, although the right to take direct part in governmental matters is

acknowledged in the Constitution, Namibians encounter numerous problems exercising this right. Despite these restrictions, it will be shown that women have managed to increase their role in the political sphere since independence in contrast to university students and young people in general who lost some of their status. In particular, in the next chapter, I will analyze how the position of students and youth in the political sphere has changed over time due to a number of factors, followed by research findings to substantiate my main arguments. In chapter six, I will discuss the role of women in the political sphere over time, which will also be supported by empirical evidence.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CLOSURE OF THE POLITICAL SPHERE FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH: THE CASE OF NAMIBIA AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

5.1 Introduction

One of distinctive features of alternative modernity in Namibia observed today is a concurrent existence of two trends fundamentally different in character: the closure of the political sphere for students and youth in general versus a growing role of women in the political sphere. It will be shown that these two trends cannot be explained by evolutionary and modernization theories and theories of globalizing modernity, which provide a simplistic account of social change. First, these theories do not take into consideration the phenomenon of invented tradition and other effects of colonialism on the Others. Since these theories see social change having a unilinear and directional character, which implies the movement from “traditional” to “modern”, they cannot explain how the customary, the modern Western, and invented traditions can be interconnected and evolve in time. Second, according to evolutionism and modernization theories, modernization leads to increasing democratization and political rights for larger social groups. And as Western modernity is globalizing, according to Giddens, we see a further spread of civil and political liberties, which characterize this modernity, around the world. Yet, as it is going to be shown in this chapter, it is not the case when it comes to Namibian students and youth, who became excluded from the political sphere shortly after independence gained in many respects due to the active role of young people in the liberation movement and who continue being marginalized today. I will first start with a discussion of the role of youth and students in Sub-Saharan African and then will move on to an overview of the position of youth and students in Namibia and research findings. The findings will show the effects of the closure of the political sphere on university students in Namibia. In the conclusion, I will suggest the reasons why the paradigm of multiple modernities provides a clearer perspective on social change with respect to students and youth in general in Namibia compared to alternative theories of social change.

5.2 The Role of Youth in Sub-Saharan Africa

The old African proverb, “What an old man sees sitting down, a young man cannot see standing up” (Menkiti 2004, p. 173) perhaps best describes how youth were viewed in pre-colonial Sub-Saharan societies. In order to take a full part in affairs of their respective communities, individuals had to reach a mature age, which was often symbolized by the rite of initiation (Gyekye, 1997). Youth did not become a subject of traditions invented by colonizers. However, it would be inaccurate to say that the role that youth played did not transform during the late pre-colonial and colonial eras. This change was mostly caused by Western education and forced labour along with urbanization, which were the products of Western modernity unfolding in Sub-Saharan Africa. The missionaries set up the first school in the region that provided students with basic modern Western skills and knowledge. During the colonial period, even though education continued being elemental and was only available to a few blacks, it sometimes served as a medium of social mobility.¹ Even though the positions school graduates could occupy were not high in rank, these young people had an advantage compared to most of the population. The same was the case for migrant workers. Although their financial gains were small, it was still much more than the majority of the local population could have during colonialism. To a certain extent, urbanization also improved the status of young Africans as it enabled them to escape the customary hierarchy existent in rural communities. However, the invented tradition of compliance and loyalty of traditional leaders to colonizers was used by the former to exert control over youth as it was done in the pre-colonial era. This resulted in numerous tensions, especially in the case of young migrant workers returning back to their communities. Traditional leaders fearful of funds and skills obtained by these migrants and determined to preserve their control imposed their authority over the allocation of land and other resources with the help of the invented tradition, which allowed them to continue having power as long as they showed their allegiance with colonizers. They also publicly complained about alleged breaches of customs by youth (Ranger, 1984). To be sure, traditional leaders resorted to “modern” ways of control over youth as well. For instance, surveillance was widely used to prevent the actions aimed at undermining the colonial regime by young people.

Once nationalist movements started spreading in Sub-Saharan countries, the status of youth changed even more dramatically. It was the first time when young people became truly

¹ It was only the case for males though.

equal members of the society. Indeed, the struggle for liberation united people from various social groups erasing age, gender, ethnic and other types of differences. In the majority of Sub-Saharan countries, youth played an extremely important role in the movement for liberation. And after independence, some of the most active young people became members of newly established governments. According to Douf (2003), many of these governments followed two paths with respect to youth. First, the delimitation of the positions of elders on the one hand and youth on the other hand was made. Second, young people became a center of the state agenda for economic development. In the public discourse, they were viewed as the hope of Africa and the whole world. Being the subject of these two very different trends (customary and modern Western), they were asked to appreciate and advance cultural, social and political responsibility, which served the purpose of creating democracy in newly established African states. In other words, young people enjoyed a prestige since they were seen as the main actors in the social transformation of Sub-Saharan Africa. Further developments in the region (primarily in the 1970s) showed that both customary rites of socialization by means of learning and working in the community and models of economic development were ineffective and deficient (Douf, 2003). And as authoritarian and military tendencies started coming into the picture in many African countries, yesterday's young political officials became today's elderly politicians resistant to leave their positions of power. The prerogative of the elder generation in the political sphere, as well as in the public space in general, has been maintained in these countries through tradition invented by political elites as they constructed the anti-colonial movement ethos with the leading role of this generation in the movement (Abbiuk, 2005). As a result, the bankruptcy of cultural, political and economic models promoted as a part of the nationalist projects across Sub-Saharan Africa after independence and the tradition invented to justify the disadvantaged position of youth had extremely negative effects on young people. And a shift in the social construction of youth from “the hope of the nation and the world” to a threat to the society occurred in a relatively short period of time (Douf, 2003; Bay, 2006). The memories of youth making real politics, being active in the society, and enjoying some economic benefits were quickly forgotten. Not only did young people lose their advantaged position, they stopped being seen as a national priority (Douf, 2003).¹

¹ In those African countries, where the liberation struggle was still under way young people continued playing an active role until independence.

The collapse of the nationalist projects and the invented tradition legitimizing the authority of elders led to alterations in youth behaviour. Frustrations of youth were caused by the social and economic problems they had to deal with on the one hand and by the exclusion from the engagement in the formal political process on the other hand. These frustrations have often resulted in alienation, militancy, or risk-taking in many countries across Sub-Saharan Africa. These tendencies have at times been used by paramilitary groups, fundamentalist movements, governments, or their opponents to mobilize youth for their purposes often along violent lines (Youth in Africa: a major resource for change; Bay, 2006; Cruise O'Brien, 1996; Lia, 2005). For instance, youth played a detrimental role in Rwanda (Roessler, 2005) during the genocide and in the civil war in Sierra Leone (Richards, 1996) in the 1990s. There is no surprise that the recruitment of youth has often been successful. The youth excluded from social, economic and political realms might feel that there is no other way to be heard except if they resort to violence (Lia, 2005; Goldstone, 2001). In addition, young people with bleak career prospects and sometimes with no formal education living in a poverty-stricken society may think that by joining fundamentalist movements, paramilitary groups, pro-government or anti-government movements they would gain respect as members and other sorts of benefits (Abbink, 2005).

Today, the median age of Sub-Saharan Africans is nineteen¹ (UN – DESA, 2010). And at the moment, young people comprise 70% of the total population of the region based on the definition of youth as everyone who is 0-29. In comparison, in Latin America and the Caribbean it is 53%, and in Europe it is 34% (Resnick & Casale, 2011). The major problem that youth all across Sub-Saharan Africa encounter is the inability to find a job in the formal sector and, therefore, a lack of material independence (Cruise O'Brien, 1996). The unemployment of youth in Sub-Saharan Africa is the second highest in the world after the Middle East and North Africa. And, according to the World Bank (2009), about 72% of youth in the region live on less than two dollars a day.² Youth are still expected to submit to lineage seniors and elders as in the pre-colonial era (Abbink, 2005). In addition, they continue being marginalized with respect to the modern Western political institutions, which adds up to the frustration of young people who already may have little hope for the successful future. It would be a mistake, however, to think that youth respond to the problems they encounter only in the destructive or violent ways. They

¹ In comparison, in Europe it is forty-two (UN – DESA, 2010).

² The World Bank defines youth as anyone who is not younger than 15 and not older than 24.

do have a potential to become agents of a positive social change as it was demonstrated in Northern Africa in 2010-2011.

5.3 The Students' Role in Sub-Saharan Africa

During the late pre-colonial period and the first several decades of the colonial rule, primary schools were few and far between and secondary schools were almost non-existent in many Sub-Saharan countries. As for post-secondary education, only after the World War II universities started being established. The same was also the case for the majority of secondary schools, which began to accept an increasing number of black students. Paradoxically, growing accessibility of modern Western education created a breeding ground for the student protest activity against colonizers (Hanna, 1975).

Early African student movements and organizations emerged in the beginning of the 20th century. However, they were sparse. The main objectives of these movements were cultural and social, not political. The primary concern was to provide students with better learning conditions. The strategies that students used in order to achieve these goals included organizing demonstrations, meetings and strikes and holding debates and seminars (Adu Boahen, 1994).

Between 1935 and 1960, student movements elevated. First, the number of student organizations noticeably increased (Adu Boahen, 1994). Second, some of them transformed into trade unions or political parties since they tried to involve as many people into their activities as possible (Ngwane, n.d.). During this period, the main focus of the student movements shifted from cultural to political. In some countries, primarily French-speaking, many of these movements became radical. They believed that the colonial regime had to be overthrown, which could not be done simply by implementing reforms. At that time, many student movements cooperated with youth movements and political parties, and the most frequent strategies they used were street demonstrations and strikes. Boycotting of classes and publishing newspapers were also popular mediums of the political protest (Adu Boahen, 1994). During the liberation struggle, students often created patriotic awareness among fighters for liberation. In addition, some of them became involved in military activity against colonizers. After the attainment of independence in many Sub-Saharan countries, the role of student movements gradually diminished.

After 1975, these movements completely stopped expanding even though there was an

exponential growth in the number of students all across the region. The reasons why it happened included financial and strategic difficulties that many student organizations encountered, as well as other internal problems; the establishment of co-opted student movements; assassinations of leaders of independent student movements by the governments; opportunism of some students; infiltration; and banning by the governments (Adu Boahen, 1994).

As in case with youth, students had a privileged status both in social and political systems for one or two decades since independence in many Sub-Saharan countries. Upon graduation, students enjoyed benefits and upward mobility that most of the African population was deprived of (Federici, 2000). However, in the successive decades the situation changed, as it was the case for youth in general, due to the failure of the nationalist project and the subsequent invention of tradition, which were mentioned before.¹ Since that time, governments across Sub-Saharan Africa have generally dismissed students' problems, which include the deterioration of study and living conditions, a decreasing social and economic value of University degrees, as well as uncertain prospects after the graduation (Konings, 2005; Lebeau & Ogunsanya, 2000; Cruise O'Brien, 1996). The governments see students as a privileged minority that does not generate anything and at the same time enjoys the opportunity to get education and, as a result of it, supposedly a higher standing in the society in the future. Therefore, it is expected from students that they should be grateful for what the government is doing for them through "responsible" behaviour, which in essence means concentrating on studies without getting involved in any public affairs, including politics (Mbembe, 1985).

The strategies students have chosen are the ones of retreat or, on the contrary, of protest. With the introduction of structural adjustment programs in the 1980s in many Sub-Saharan countries, some students began to target the state to address the problems associated with the deterioration of the educational system² (Federici, 2000). However, the government's response to these protests was often violent and suppressing. Konings (2005) argues that democratization that took place in the beginning of the 1990s in Sub-Saharan Africa provided students with more opportunities to express their dissatisfaction publicly. Even though since 1994 -1995 the retreat

¹ In those countries where people were still fighting for independence, students continued being actively involved in political and social affairs. It was after independence when their status was undermined.

² One of the features of structural adjustment programs, which started undermining institutions of higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa, was a demand to cancel state subsidies to universities and students (Federici, 2000).

to authoritarianism has been observed, the developments that took place in the beginning of the 1990s served as a catalyst for continuous protest activity among students. However, these protests have not resulted in any significant positive changes. Students, as youth in general, continue being disadvantaged socially, economically, and politically. They are in essence excluded from the formal public space, including the sphere of politics, which is not susceptible to their demands. Political officials continue not to take seriously students and their publicly expressed concerns denying them formal channels of down-top communication. This leads to further frustration and dissatisfaction among students, which, in turn, may and does result in violent actions against governments. Even students who support the government rarely play any significant role in their country's formal politics. In fact, they are likely manipulated by the leading politicians to do “dirty work” such as combating student rebels or fighting the opposition (Konings, 2005).

5.4 Namibian Students and Youth: an Overview

As in the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa, in pre-colonial Namibian societies youth were seen as inferior and in need of the adult supervision and control. During the late pre-colonial and colonial eras, Namibia experienced the same developments as other countries in the region. As a result of the spread of education and training first provided by missionaries, a small portion of Namibian young people was able to obtain professional skills and knowledge. In addition, as forced labour was installed, young people (predominantly males) started moving to urban areas. Upon the return to their communities, occasional conflicts between them and traditional leaders started taking place. The struggle for liberation equalized the position of youth and students with the rest of the population. This happened not only because students and youth were actively involved in the anti-colonial movement, but also because traditional leaders became increasingly unpopular as most of them were compliant to colonizers. In this section, I will focus on the student movement during the liberation struggle, as it played one of the most visible and important roles.

The first student organization called the South West Africa Student Body (SWASB) was established in 1952 by Namibian young people who studied in South Africa, as tertiary and secondary schools for non-whites were not yet established in Namibia.¹ The organization

¹ Except the Augustineum Teachers College in Okahandja.

initially focused on cultural issues, but later on began addressing issues related to politics as well. SWASB came to an end in 1958 mostly because the organization had an extremely small support base since it operated in South Africa. SWASB leaders only had a chance to come back to Namibia for school vacations and could not travel around the country to campaign among students because freedom of movement was still limited for blacks at that time (Maseko, 1995).

Following the 1971 worker's strike and the 1971 students' boycott of classes in northern Namibia with a demand to release and reinstate fellow students who participated in one of the demonstrations, a number of students met at a Christian students' conference that took place in Okahandja in 1972. During this conference, they proposed to establish a new organization that would advocate the unity of all Namibian students. As a result, the Namibian Black Students' Organization (NABSO) was formed in 1975. However, already in 1977 the organization dissipated primarily because of the differences among its members. Another problem was that NABSO adhered to the idea of the Black Consciousness, which was seen by most Namibian coloured and white students as exclusionist or even racist. Some of these students made a decision to establish a new organization, which was called the Namibian Student Organization (NAMSO). Even though this organization was open to all ethnic groups studying in secondary and post-secondary institutions, it failed to attract any members other than white and coloured students. The organization was disbanded in 1984 for a number of reasons. First, there was a lack of support of the oppressed students partly due to the privileges non-Black members of NAMSO had, which put into question the genuineness of NAMSO's announced goals in the liberation struggle. Second, the organization encountered financial difficulties, and, finally, leaders of NAMSO studied in South Africa because no tertiary institutions existed in Namibia at that time. As a result, they were disengaged from people in Namibia (Maseko, 1995).

The most prominent student organization to arise was the Namibia National Students' Organisation (NANSO), which was established in 1983. As in case of other student organizations, its aim was to connect all Namibian students. Indeed, the organization tried to attract every student who was oppressed, regardless of his or her political preferences (Bauer, 1999). Initially, NANSO was not widely known to Namibian students since most of its leaders studied in South Africa. The situation changed when NANSO organized its first public convention in Katutura, a township of Windhoek, in 1986. According to Maseko (1995), the rally marked the beginning of a new period of organized resistance. Nevertheless, it did not attract

mass support for NANSO right away. In 1987, the objectives of NANSO were expanded to include the anti-colonial agenda, apart from focusing on education only, as the organization recognized that without the liberation of Namibians a full-fledged education system could not be established (Sundberg, 1991). From then on, the organization began to engage in politics openly. In addition, it started being distinguished by the South African regime as an important pro-liberation force, which led to the detention and beating of many NANSO activists. To divert attention and support from NANSO, South African administration began to allow the operation of moderate student organizations such as the Namibia Council of Students (NACOS), which was found in 1987, and the Academy Students' Organization (ASO) established in 1988 (Maseko, 1995). From mid-1988, SWAPO began to acknowledge publicly NANSO's contributions to the struggle for liberation, which in turn enabled NANSO to receive foreign funding from the same sources that assisted SWAPO (Williams, 2004).

One of the main merits of the student movement during colonial times is that it was successful in minimizing differences and creating alliances among various ethnic groups. This was one of the reasons why SWAPO valued the student movement and considered this movement as one of its integral components. According to Mbuende (1995), the student movement helped strengthen SWAPO because it created "a new social consciousness." NANSO was very strong in the last stages of the liberation struggle. Young people comprising this organization were enthusiastic and passionate, and many people who became political leaders in the post-colonial Namibia emerged out of this organization (Field notes, April-May 2009). However, NANSO should not be idealized, as it held negative attitudes towards other student organizations during the liberation struggle and used the same rhetoric as SWAPO employs today when referring to opposition parties. In particular, NANSO representatives claimed that the activities of other student organizations were "deceptive and clandestine exercises whose aim is to disguise true motives – the creation of confusion and disunity" (*The Namibian Worker*, 1990).

5.5 The Current Condition of the Student Movement, Youth Organizations and Youth

Political Party Wings in Namibia

NANSO was initially independent, but in 1989 it formally affiliated with SWAPO. The organization made a decision to affiliate with SWAPO for a number of reasons. First and foremost, NANSO wanted to secure SWAPO's victory in the struggle for liberation. In addition, by affiliating NANSO wanted to improve SWAPO's reputation partly spoilt by the detainee issue. Third, NANSO leadership saw post-independent Namibia as a socialist country with one party, SWAPO, having a majority in the election (in essence, a one-party state). Therefore, NANSO felt that the affiliation would make this plan more realistic. In 1991, however, NANSO disaffiliated for the following reasons: 1) this was intended to secure better control of the activities and structures of the organization from outsiders; 2) the organization came across the difficulty of attracting the students who did not support SWAPO, which, in NANSO's opinion, had resulted in lack of unity among students and had decreased NANSO's support base; and 3) NANSO felt that de-affiliation would allow the organization to have more impact on the adoption of state policies aimed at protection of students' rights (Maseko, 1995). The disaffiliation split NANSO into those who wanted to stay affiliated and those who did not want to do so. According to Maseko (1995), SWAPO did not take the affiliation of NANSO seriously. In contrast, its disaffiliation was not tolerated by the ruling party. Those members of NANSO who supported the disaffiliation were called "foreign agents" by SWAPO leaders. The ruling party shortly after assisted with the formation of another student organization that was loyal to it. As a result, NANSO lost almost half of its members and encountered other numerous difficulties, including financial and administrative ones (Bauer, 1999). In practice, NANSO became marginalized. Today, this organization appears to have no political intellectuals and no agenda to attract young people (Field notes, April – May 2009). All other student organizations are weak in the country even compared to NANSO. As for the Students' Representative Councils (SRCs) in UNAM and the Polytechnic of Namibia, they have support from SWAPO. The councils have energy but since the prospects for a large student movement are not bright at the moment, their role is insignificant (Field notes, April-May 2009).

Currently, several Namibian parties have youth wings. The most outspoken of all parties' youth wings is the South West Africa People's Organization Party Youth League (SPYL). According to a member of the Institute for Public Policy Research, Windhoek (Field notes,

April-May 2009), this league holds an “old-fashioned anti-colonial nationalist ideological position”. SPYL has been to some extent an embarrassment to the government and sometimes even to SWAPO because of its provocative opinions or activities (Field notes, April-May 2009). Youth are occasionally discredited by the League, which acts and talks in an intolerant and insensitive way on behalf of all young people. Some of its active members lack any democratic culture, and an open confrontation between the League and the president in 2009 only poured oil on the flames.

We cannot end a discussion of the current state of student and youth organizations in Namibia without acknowledging the National Youth Council. Established in 1994, it has served as an umbrella organization to assist youth organizations with cultural, religious, and political objectives. The National Youth Council runs several projects that aim to create employment opportunities, protect the environment, and raise awareness of HIV and gender-based violence (Field notes, April-May 2009). Its other functions include advising the relevant ministry regarding youth issues and coordinating youth activities (Mufune, 2000). In spite of the fact that this organization claims to be independent and non-political, it is generally perceived to be pro-SWAPO (Hopwood, 2007). That is why some Namibians believe that they cannot report to the organization the incidents of young people being affected by such problems as HIV or unemployment fearing that it can be perceived as the indirect criticism of the ruling party (Field notes, April-May 2009).

5.6 The Role of the Government in Youth’s and Students’ Political Activity and in Eliminating Social Problems among Youth

In the official government rhetoric, the important role of youth in Namibian society is generally acknowledged. According to the former Minister of Youth and Sport, “young people are an asset of any nation. They are full of energy and have a dream and vision for the future” (Kapelwa-Kabajani 2000, p. 275). This view is declared in the official documents as well. For example, in both the National Youth Policy and the African Youth Charter, which the Namibian government ratified on 12 March 2008, it is said that youth are an important part of the society since they can have a positive impact on social, political, and economic spheres if provided appropriate resources for the development of their skills and capacities. However, in practice, what we see does not always conform to the ideal. This will be shown by the example of what

kinds of social problems youth encounter and how the government responds to them, and by the example of the possibilities of political participation provided to the youth by the government.

Social problems encountered by youth and students

As mentioned earlier, Sub-Saharan Africa has a large young population. This youth strives to be educated and to have a good job and a stable family. However, in reality many young people encounter diseases, specifically HIV/AIDS, high unemployment, marginalization, displacement, and other instabilities and uncertainties, which make the achievement of their dreams unlikely (Youth in Africa: A Major Resource for Change). Namibian youth are prone to the same kinds of risks as other young people on the continent. Most young people, especially rural, are disadvantaged and vulnerable. Massive school dropouts, HIV/AIDS, high unemployment and, as a result, poverty are the key issues that Namibian youth encounter (Third National Development Plan [NDP3]; Wikan, n.d.; Keulder & Van Zyl, 2001). Realizing the importance of these problems, the government has taken measures to solve them. However, the overall success of the policies is questionable, except for addressing the HIV/AIDS problem, where the government has achieved some progress. The rate of HIV/AIDS among the youth decreased from roughly 20% in 2001 to 15% in 2009. The standards of school and university education are quite low, despite the government spending about 15% of the annual budget on it. Massive dropouts from schools are persistent. There are similar problems with unemployment, which has been increasing in the last several years (Third National Development Plan (NDP3)). As in other Sub-Saharan countries, Namibian students do not have significant advantages compared to other youth. Many of them are from lower, or, at the best, middle-class families. In addition, with high unemployment rate, many people, most of whom are youth, find it very difficult to obtain a job. And university education does not provide any guarantees of a carefree future. During my visit to Namibia, I met young people who were still looking for a job after one year since graduation.

Political participation of youth and students: the role of the government

Van Zyl and Keulder (2001) suggest that participation of youth in politics is important because:

- 1) the consolidation of democracy cannot be fulfilled without the integration of young people

into political life; 2) participation contributes to the socialization of young people due to its behavioural and attitudinal attributes; and 3) without youth participation, issues related specifically to youth might not be necessarily adequately addressed. The same can be said with regard to the importance of student participation in politics. In addition, students have a broad view on political and social issues and can make productive critical judgments about political matters or policies. In other words, they have necessary knowledge and skills to contribute to the decision-making process in their countries. In practice, however, African youth and students very often either resort to protesting and violence or prefer to stay away from politics. They become dissatisfied not only with the political regime, but also with institutional politics in general (Keulder, 1998). With a few exceptions when young people have resorted to anti-government protesting activities since independence in Namibia, apathy is the most characteristic feature of the behaviour of youth and students in the political sphere. In 1998, Keulder found that Namibian university students are mostly apathetic, and, as another survey conducted in 2000/01 showed, so is youth in general (Keulder & Spilker, 2001).

The second sentence of the foreword of the 2006 African Youth Charter states that the *African Union Constitutive Act* and the African Union Commission Strategic Plan 2004–2007 “underscore the importance of youth participation and involvement in the development of the continent.” In addition, in the African Youth Charter, as well as in the Namibian National Youth Policy, a noticeable part is allocated to an outline of youth rights to participation in decision-making and other political activities that promote democracy (see, for example, section 7. 1 in the National Youth Policy, or Article 11 in the African Youth Charter). Moreover, participation in politics is considered a responsibility. Thus, the Namibian government recognizes that youth participation in the political sphere is essential.

In practice, only a few positive trends are observable. From time to time the government organizes programs to educate youth and students on the political process. For instance, in 2002, meetings at 107 schools in all 13 regions of the country were held to inform the youth about the Parliament’s activity, possibilities of public participation that the Namibian Parliament had developed, and the roles and responsibilities of people’s elected representatives (Towards increased and informed..., 2002). Public hearings are also held on a regular basis in the country and they are open to youth. For instance, public hearings in education were held country-wide

with youth and students included. However, as in the case of other public consultations, only a few recommendations from these meetings were taken into consideration and implemented into policies (Field notes, April-May 2009). Insufficient attention to youth as a group by the government is reflected in the absence of reserved seats for youth in government institutions. In addition, not only does SWAPO lack young political leaders in its ranks (outside SPYL¹), but the opposition parties, such as RDP, do as well. Even though RDP is conceived as a relentless rival of the ruling party, it has a similar structure and social composition. With life expectancy of 53 for males and 62 for females in the country, only one out of nine RDP members who became a Member of Parliament as a result of the 2009 election was younger than 40 (born in 1972). As in many other Sub-Saharan countries, the ethos of the struggle for liberation, which formed the invented tradition, was constructed in Namibia through acknowledging and honouring the sacrifice of freedom fighters and emphasizing the intent to fulfil their dreams after independence (Kossler, 2007). This ethos was employed to justify the irremovability of the political leaders and to legitimize the superior position of the elders in the political sphere and the public space in general (Becker, 2011; Zuern, 2012; Melber, 2007).

We can conclude that there has been a tremendous shift in the role Namibian youth and students play in the society since the struggle for liberation started from the one characterized by equality to the one similar to the role youth played in pre-colonial Namibian and other Sub-Saharan societies. As in the majority of countries in the region, Namibian youth and students were an integral part of the liberation movement. However, soon after independence they became excluded from the political sphere and the public space in general, which coincided with the gradual fading of democratization, which started taking place in 1994-1995. The reasons accounting for the closure of the public space for youth and students include a lack of a strong student movement and most importantly the tradition invented by the Namibian political elite as a result of the government's failure to effectively address economic and social problems youth and students encounter and increasing authoritarian tendencies observed in politics.

In the next section, I will discuss the effects of the closure of the political sphere on university students in Namibia based on the study I conducted in 2009.

¹ To be sure, none of SPYL members were listed in the top 20 in the SWAPO list of candidates to the National Assembly for the general election held in November 2009.

5.7 Research Findings: the Closure of the Political Sphere and Namibian Students

Khabeme Matlosa (2004) argues that the Namibian political regime is close to liberal democracy as defined in chapter 3 (pp. 38-39). One of the characteristics of liberal democracy is that it creates opportunities for broad political activity for people and their empowerment. By looking at the results of the survey, focus groups, and informal discussions with students and experts, we can conclude that this is not the case. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, students and youth contributed to the liberation movement in the country and in Sub-Saharan Africa in general. Therefore, the customary roles that existed in the society before colonization and partly during the colonial rule, namely that the place of adults was in the public space and the place of the youth was in the private sphere, stopped playing any role during the liberation struggle. If women, as it will be shown in chapter six, were able to use the experience they gained during the struggle for independence to improve their political position compared to colonial times in Sub-Saharan Africa in general and in Namibia in particular, students and youth should have made comparable gains, but did not. I suggest that this was due to the closure of the political sphere and public space in general for this social group, which was mostly a result of the tradition that was invented by political elites and that constructed youth and students as inferior based on the liberation struggle ethos. Both the experts and the students who participated in focus groups and the informal discussions noted that today Namibian young people are seen as children, inexperienced, and thus subordinate. Many students complained that the political sphere is for the most part restricted to elders. One of the students said, "I think in our country they really consider if you lived during the colonial times then you have the rights even if you are saying rubbish", whereas another participant shared the following view: "If you are born in exile, you know what the country has gone through...because only those people are a part of politics in our country." One focus group participant said that a good indicator of how elders think of the youth is the Parliament, where there are no young people. Several other students shared this opinion: "those [young people] that are involved have freedom to say whatever they want to bring about change...but they come in front of the elders, they say this and this, but no change is brought about." In other words, these students believe that young people potentially can have a voice but are not taken seriously enough. Two students said that only if you are a member of the SPYL are your views considered.

Despite more than half of students (57.7% of students at the University of Namibia and 52.1% of students at the Polytechnic of Namibia) believe that they have more opportunities to participate in politics than their parents had at their age, and despite their having most if not all possible political rights as expressed in their survey responses, more than 55% of students in both universities either agreed or somewhat agreed with the statement, “Voting is the only way I can have any say about how the government runs things”. In other words, in the opinion of at least 55% of students there are numerous obstacles in exercising political rights and limited ways to influence decision-making in the country. This is substantiated by the answers to another question as well. Even though 69.5% or more students chose the options “a great deal of difference” and “some difference” when answering the question, “Thinking about the problems you see in your community, how much difference do you believe you can personally make in solving the problems you see?”, a smaller percentage of students felt that they could make a difference at the regional and national levels. For the regional level, it was 50.7% for UNAM and 49.5% for the Polytechnic whereas for the national level it was even lower (37.3% in UNAM and 39.0% in the Polytechnic respectively). A significant number of students (at least 35.3% depending on the group) felt that they could only make little difference or no difference at all in their region or in the country in general (see Tables 5.1, p. 64). As a causal analysis demonstrated (Appendix 4, pp. 158-159), the sense of political ineffectiveness has a negative impact on students’ chances to be involved in the political sphere.

Table 5.1 Responses of UNAM and Polytechnic students to the question, “Thinking about the problems you see in your community/region/country, how much difference do you believe you can personally make in solving the problems you see?”

| | Your community | | Your region | | Your country | |
|----------------------------|----------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|
| | UNAM % | Polytechnic % | UNAM % | Polytechnic % | UNAM % | Polytechnic % |
| A great deal of difference | 42.7 | 42.6 | 17.8 | 18.4 | 19.9 | 22.3 |
| Some difference | 29.6 | 26.9 | 32.9 | 31.1 | 17.4 | 16.7 |
| A little difference | 15.0 | 12.8 | 25.0 | 24.6 | 25.7 | 22.3 |
| No difference at all | 4.5 | 7.2 | 11.3 | 11.8 | 17.7 | 17.0 |
| I don't know | 3.1 | 4.6 | 6.7 | 5.9 | 13.9 | 14.8 |
| Missing data | 5.0 | 5.9 | 6.3 | 8.2 | 5.5 | 6.9 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Indeed, the actual political participation of university students in my survey was found to be low, except for voting and working with others on solving a community problem. Some 53.5% of UNAM students and 55.7% of Polytechnic students said that they were going to vote in the upcoming presidential election in 2009. Fewer students expressed the view that they would vote in the National Assembly election (37.9% of UNAM students and 33.8% of Polytechnic students). As for working with others on solving a community problem, 35.5% of UNAM students and 31.1% of Polytechnic students said that they did so in 2008. The percentage ranged from 8.9% to 14.1% for students who participated in the following activities: contacting/writing to governmental officials on the individual issue(s), writing a letter or viewpoint on political issue(s) to a journal/newspaper, and consulting local/regional/national officials on a public issue. Higher participation was observed for demonstrations and rallies,¹ in which 15.0% of UNAM students and 17.4% of Polytechnic students took part in 2008, and for membership in political organization(s). Some 19.9% of students at UNAM and 20.3% of students at the Polytechnic of Namibia indicated that they had a membership. The lowest participation was observed for contacting or writing to governmental officials on local/regional/national issue(s) (5.0% of UNAM and 8.2% of Polytechnic students) and active work in some political organization (5.2% of UNAM students and 5.9% of Polytechnic students). As the results of the survey showed, the majority of the students, who did not take part in a particular type of political activity in 2008 would have liked to participate in politics unconditionally or under certain circumstances. These numbers were high for all types of political activity reaching 66%, except lawful demonstrations, rallies, and marches, in which slightly less than 50% of students would like to have participated² (see Table 5.2, p. 67). Therefore, students have a high potential to be more active in politics. In addition, as focus groups showed, if provided a platform to express openly their views about the issues that concern them, or an opportunity to be involved in various political activities, many of them believe they would be able to contribute to the improvement of the economic and social situation in the country. As one of the student vividly mentioned, she would participate in

¹ This conforms to the discussion of a high protesting potential of students and youth in Sub-Saharan Africa presented in this chapter.

² The question on the likelihood of participation in two types of political activity, voting and taking part in the work of political organizations, was not asked.

politics if she were given a chance to be “a part of the people that are establishing new things for the future life.”

Table 5.2 Responses of UNAM and Polytechnic students to the question, “Have you personally done any of these things during the past year?”

| | Working with others in your community on solving a community problem | | Contacting/writing to governmental officials on the individual issue(s) | | Writing a letter or viewpoint on political issue(s) to a newspaper/journal/newsletter | | Consulting local/regional/national officials on a public issue | | Participating in lawful demonstrations, rallies, marches | | Collaborating with local/regional/national officials on solving a public issue | | Contacting/writing to governmental officials on local/regional/national issue(s) | |
|--|--|--------------|---|--------------|---|--------------|--|--------------|--|--------------|--|--------------|--|--------------|
| | UNAM % | Poly % | UNAM % | Poly % | UNAM % | Poly % | UNAM % | Poly % | UNAM % | Poly % | UNAM % | Poly % | UNAM % | Poly % |
| Yes, I've done it | 35.5 | 31.1 | 8.9 | 11.5 | 11.4 | 12.1 | 11.4 | 14.1 | 15.0 | 17.4 | 10.0 | 10.2 | 5.0 | 8.2 |
| No, but would do if I had a chance | 39.1 | 43.3 | 34.4 | 29.2 | 28.3 | 26.6 | 32.4 | 25.2 | 22.1 | 18.4 | 39.0 | 35.7 | 36.5 | 33.1 |
| No, but would do under certain circumstances | 14.4 | 12.8 | 31.3 | 33.4 | 29.1 | 27.5 | 25.8 | 32.8 | 23.5 | 27.9 | 26.6 | 26.9 | 29.0 | 28.2 |
| No, and I would never do this | 5.5 | 3.9 | 18.6 | 15.1 | 23.2 | 22.6 | 20.3 | 16.1 | 30.0 | 25.6 | 15.8 | 15.7 | 21.1 | 19.7 |
| Missing data | 5.5 | 8.9 | 6.7 | 10.8 | 8.0 | 11.1 | 10.0 | 11.8 | 9.4 | 10.8 | 8.6 | 11.5 | 8.5 | 10.8 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

The students' feeling of political ineffectiveness and a low level of participation in politics are not the only consequences of the closure of the political sphere in the country. As the survey and focus groups showed, the notion of what one should believe and how one should behave to avoid mockery and suspicion is prominent among Namibian university students, including those who support the ruling party.¹ Some 71.5% of UNAM and 66.2% of Polytechnic students either agreed or somewhat agreed with the statement, "In this country, you must be very careful about what you say and do with regard to politics". Four focus group participants identified fear as a determinant factor of non-involvement of students in politics.² One of these students said, "We have fear. For instance, I support RDP and I know it's the biggest enemy of the ruling party...I am also scared to create hatred among my other colleagues. Hatred, rejection and all that..." Another participant noted that some students are fearful of getting involved in politics while they are studying, as they may have problems getting a public or government job if an employer finds out that they supported an opposition party. One of the students noted that her parents warned her to stay away from politics because they fear that she can be expelled from the university if she openly supports an opposition party. Another participant shared a story that in 2008 when some students, including her, tried to register RDPYL at the University of Namibia, SRC's staff cautioned them that if they continued with their activities, SRC would make sure that loans provided by the government would be taken away from them and their grades would be changed.

On the question, "What can personally motivate you to participate?" one of the students said the following: "If I won't be hurt, I won't be shot at with tomatoes, I won't be...you know, going on the streets and people start throwing stones at me." Another focus group participant compared opposition parties' supporters with SWAPO supporters: "They [SWAPO supporters] can wear their party t-shirts, they have nothing to fear..." As it was found, not only is political activity on the side of opposition parties discouraged by unrelated ruling party supporters, but it is also often disapproved by family members who also support SWAPO. As one of students from the Polytechnic of Namibia with whom I had a conversation noted, many students he knows cannot openly support the opposition parties because their parents and family are against it. Parents and other family members often see SWAPO as the liberation force and thus the only

¹ Here, we can see dramatically the effect of the closure of the political sphere.

² Three of these students were opposition parties' supporters.

legitimate party to rule in the country (Field notes April – May, 2009). Based on the informal discussions with experts and students as well as focus groups, it was found that currently Namibian students who support the ruling party are more active in formal politics than the supporters of opposition parties. It is not only because the political activity of SWAPO supporters has much lower chances to be hindered, but also because political engagement on the side of the ruling party can lead to clear benefits, such as jobs, which for some may play an important role in the situation of social and economic marginalization of the young population.

Another effect of the closure of the political sphere is disenchantment with politics, which is partly related to the previously mentioned consequences, namely fear and the feeling of ineffectiveness. As it was found in the univariate analysis of the survey results, more students are likely to have negative associations with the word “politics” than neutral or positive associations. They often consider politics as a corrupt¹ and hypocritical activity causing problems and conflicts. Some students do not see issues related to youth being solved, such as unemployment and low standards of education, which in turn contributes to the negative impression of political matters. Dissatisfaction often does not translate into the intention to act in the political sphere in order to improve it. On the contrary, it leads to a conscious decision by some students to stay away from political matters, as demonstrated in both the statistical analysis and focus groups. There were hopes that the emergence of RDP would energize political activity in the country, which indeed initially took place. However, the reaction of SWAPO and the government was swift and negative. This caused some young people, including students, to rethink whether they should continue to support RDP. In some cases, they concluded that it would be safer to stay away from politics. Two focus group participants shared the opinion that the whole political system has to be changed in order to make students participate more actively. Interestingly, these particular students did not want to take part in this change.

Attention should also be given to students from ethnic minorities. As the bivariate analysis showed (see Appendix 4, pp. 151-152), students in my study from the major ethnic group (Ovambo) are the most active when it comes to politics. Alternatively, Baster, Kavango,

¹ A significant number of students said that the majority of government officials in the Parliament (32.4% in UNAM and 36.1% in Polytechnic), the cabinet (34.0% in UNAM and 40.0% in Polytechnic), civil service (44.3% in UNAM and 45.2% in Polytechnic) and local government (41.1% in UNAM and 39.4% in Polytechnic) take bribes.

Damara and Afrikaner students were found to be the least active. In addition, in a focus group with students from ethnic minorities, participants mentioned that ethnic minorities do not have equal rights with the Ovambo majority. One of the students said the following: “The situation here is that a tribe is against another tribe”, whereas another one shared a view that political participation has to be equal for all ethnic groups. These focus group participants were also more critical of the President, members of Parliament, regional and local authority councilors, as well as of traditional leaders compared to Ovambo students who supported the ruling party or who were not going to vote in the upcoming 2009 elections.

Even though ethnic minorities comprise almost 50% of the Namibian population, they are not well represented in formal politics. One of the reasons is that SWAPO continues to be perceived as the Ovambo’s majority party and the activity of other parties is limited. Yet, unless the government, which is mostly comprised of SWAPO members, takes active measures to solve the problem of exclusion of various ethnicities from the political sphere, students from ethnic minority groups will continue to stay away from politics as well.

One of the key contexts that have an impact on students in terms of the formation of attitudes towards rights and responsibilities of active citizens is the university environment. Ideally, education should promote responsible citizenship and civic virtues (Durkheim, 1956) and universities being a part of the public space should raise the political consciousness of students (Habermas, 1971). Is this the case for Namibian universities? An informal discussion with one of the experts revealed that in high schools, which are intended to prepare young people for the university, there is a subject called “development studies” that covers issues related to democracy. However, it is not compulsory. Namibian universities also have no compulsory subject on citizenship, human rights, and democracy. After the establishment of UNAM, there was a plan to create a course that every first-year student would have to take. However, the plan was not implemented. Instead, a subject called “Social issues” is in place, and it covers HIV/AIDS, ethics, and gender issues (Field notes April – May 2009), which are undoubtedly important but the discussion of these problems is insufficient for the development of students as citizens. In the Polytechnic of Namibia there is no compulsory course even on social issues. Perhaps, the reason why no compulsory courses that cover the topics related to democracy and human rights are offered at both universities is that the government is not interested in the formation of students as knowledgeable and active citizens and sees universities mostly as providers of professional skills and knowledge. Yet, as discovered in focus groups, courses on

democracy and other political and civic issues can improve the chances of students' involvement in the political sphere. Two focus group participants said that, among university students, those who study political science are the most actively involved. In addition, one student who participated in the focus group shared that a political science course had motivated her to write a letter to the Prime Minister. Another student said that she realized that it is important to participate in political matters after she took a course in political science.

The activities of any political organization, party, or club are not allowed on campus at the Polytechnic of Namibia. According to one of SRC's members, political activity was banned in 2000 after a new opposition party (CoD) was formed. The official reason given by the administration of the Polytechnic was the possibility of disruption of the educational process due to CoD activity on campus. At the time when I was in Namibia (April-May, 2009), the National Youth Council and the Students' Representative Council were trying to persuade the administration to lift the ban. On the UNAM campus, only SWAPO was allowed to register on campus until 2008. Through persistent and effective activity of RDP supporters, this party was able to register in 2008. Today, only SWAPO and RDP can have campaigns, demonstrations, and other activities on the UNAM campus.

As for my own observations, I did not see any posters that advertised political clubs in UNAM during two months that I stayed in Namibia. In both universities, I also did not come across any posters on a public discussion, a lecture, or a seminar on any important social or political issue. Although university education in Namibia helps develop critical thinking, a lack of subjects on political and civic issues, as well as the absence of widespread political activity and public debates on campus, result in a situation in which this critical thinking can only be applied to a specific field of study.

We can conclude that there are several major effects of the closure of the Namibian political sphere, which has been a part of a larger process of the closure of public space for youth and students since the middle of the 1990s mostly as a result of the invented tradition. The Namibian political elite invented this tradition, which constructs youth and students as inexperienced and not ready for taking part in political matters. The tradition developed due to the inability of the political elite to address social and economic problems of youth and students on the one hand and growing anti-democratic trends in formal politics on the other hand. The effects of the closure of the political sphere include the following: 1) general lack of political

activity: as it was found, with few exceptions, the percentage of students taking part in various types of political activity is low; 2) a feeling of political ineffectiveness: most students believe that they can influence political matters only in a limited way and face miscellaneous hindrances in exercising political rights they have, which subsequently affects their participation in the political sphere in the negative manner; 3) fear: opposition parties' supporters have lower chances of being involved in the political sphere because of fear of condemnation, harassment, and disapproval by others, including parents and other family members. However, even the supporters of the ruling party often have to be careful about what they do and say with respect to politics; 4) a practical view on participation in politics: some students support the ruling party and take part in the activities on its behalf in the hope of obtaining benefits such as government jobs; 5) ethnic exclusion: students from ethnic minorities are less engaged in politics than students from the major ethnic group, Ovambo, whose interests are better represented in formal politics. As discovered, students from ethnic minorities often feel like observers of political events and not like active participants; 6) dissatisfaction with politics: the closure of the political sphere makes students disenchanted with politics, which in turn leads to further lack of political activity. Some of them want the political system to be completely altered but they are not interested in putting any effort into changing it; and, 7) a largely non-political university environment: if at UNAM political activity is allowed even though limited to activities on the side of SWAPO and RDP, in the Polytechnic of Namibia any political activity is prohibited. In addition, public debates are rare on both university campuses and there are no obligatory courses that cover topics related to citizenship, democracy, and human rights. Yet, civic education was found to have a positive effect on the involvement of university students in the political sphere.

5.8 Conclusion

By drawing attention to the unique interrelationships of the modern Western, customs and invented traditions, in this chapter I focused on one of the two major themes, the closure of the political sphere for students and youth, to suggest that Namibia has its own type of the modern. I first demonstrated how the position of students and youth in general has changed over the Namibian history, as it happened in many other African countries. In the pre-colonial era, the role of Namibian young people was determined by customs. During the late pre-colonial and colonial times, the modern Western conditions, such as urbanization, waged labour and Western education, started affecting their standing. However, customs continued being used by traditional

leaders to exert control over youth. The struggle for liberation equalized the position of young people with the rest of the population. After independence, democratization unfolded in Namibia, which coincided with democratization in some other countries. Yet, in Namibia we could expect that youth and students would become a part of the formal political sphere since they comprise the prevailing majority of the population. However, as it was shown, this did not happen. In addition, after independence the Namibian political elite invented the tradition based on the nationalist movement ethos to legitimize the superior position of elders. This invented tradition continues to be in place today despite the fact that youth and students as a social group played a leading role in the liberation struggle. The phenomenon of the invented tradition with regard to youth and students based on glorifying the participants of the liberation movement distinguishes Namibian modernity.

It is often argued that youth and students are frequently disengaged from the formal political sphere, as a part of the public space, and do not actively participate in conventional political activities even in modernities that are characterized by full-fledged democracy and the openness of the public space to various social groups (Forbrig, 2005; Milner, 2008; Carpin, 2000; Brooks, 2009). Yet, as my research and the literature review showed, the majority of Namibian students and youth in general would want to be more actively involved in politics. However, since the political sphere, and the public space overall, remain inaccessible to them, their aspirations cannot be realized. As demonstrated based on the collected data, the closure of the political sphere for university students has resulted in a low level of political participation, a feeling of political ineffectiveness, dissatisfaction with politics, fear, a largely non-political university environment, ethnic marginalization from the political sphere, and participation in political activity solely for the purpose of obtaining economic benefits.

Three main implications can be drawn when one applies the paradigm of multiple modernities to the analysis of social change with respect to the position of Namibian university students and youth in general in the political sphere from the interdisciplinary perspective. First, the paradigm allows questioning a simplistic dichotomy of “tradition” versus “modernity” through the critical examination of the connections between the modern Western, customs, and invented traditions. In this chapter, my intention was to show that the evaluation of the interrelationships between these three elements is necessary to account for the changing role of university students and youth in general with respect to Namibian political sphere. Second, the paradigm of multiple modernities provides an opportunity to critically evaluate the character of

social change in Namibia. As it was shown in this chapter, university students and youth in general have not experienced progressively positive changes over the country's history as suggested by dominant theories of social change. Instead, they have gone through a series of ups and downs associated with their position with regard to the political sphere and the public space in general. Third, the paradigm of alternative modernities helps see the differences between Namibian modernity with its nonlinear changes in the role students and youth in general have played in the political sphere and the ideal type of Western modernity characterized by growing political and civil rights for larger social groups. In addition, this paradigm allows observing specificities of social change with respect to the youth's and students' role in the political sphere that characterize various modernities that exist in the world in comparison to each other. In other words, the paradigm of multiple modernities provides an opportunity to question the claim about universalization of Western modernity across the globe.

CHAPTER SIX

WOMEN AND THE POLITICAL SPHERE: NAMIBIA AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

6.1 Introduction

Namibian modernity is characterized by the increasing role of women in the political sphere, which stands in stark contrast to the position of university students and young people in general in relation to this sphere as described in the previous chapter. This has been happening despite the fact that the tradition invented by colonizers is still used as an excuse to exclude women from various spheres of influence and the tendencies of authoritarianism that have been increasingly distinctive since 1994-1995 in the country. Evolutionary and modernization theories, as well as theories of globalizing modernity, cannot account for these processes in contrast to the paradigm of multiple modernities. Evolutionism and modernization theories support a unilinear and directional social change from “traditional” to “modern” excluding a number of external factors, such as colonialism and its effects (invented tradition, among others), from the analysis. Therefore, they cannot explain the interrelationships between the modern Western, customs, and invented traditions. In addition, these theories do not account for the opposite processes of one social group gaining more weight in politics and another social group becoming marginalized from the political sphere during the same period of time. As for the theories of globalizing modernity, Giddens questions the sustainability of customs in the globalizing world. He argues that Western modernity is universalizing, which means, as we can assume, that women are becoming more and more politically involved around the world. Yet, as it will be shown, this is a simplistic way of explaining social change with respect to women. Giddens also does not pay any attention to invented traditions, which originated in non-Western societies as a result of the colonial activities. This makes his analysis of social change somewhat limited. In addition, his theory cannot explain the reverse trends with respect to the students’ and youths’ role in the political sphere on the one hand and the role of women in the same sphere on the other hand observed in Namibia under the condition of globalizing Western modernity, which is currently in place, according to him. In this chapter, the paradigm of multiple modernities is employed, instead of the mentioned theories, to show that the concept of multiple modernities is more useful in accounting for social change with respect to the role Namibian women have played in the political sphere.

I will begin this chapter with an overview of the women’s position in Sub-Saharan Africa

during the pre-colonial and colonial times and after independence. Then it will be shown that Namibia has undergone a similar social change, as other countries in the region, except for that Namibian women were not excluded from the political sphere after the country gained independence as it happened in many other Sub-Saharan states. This was partly due to the fact that Namibia became independent only in 1990, which coincided with democratization processes observed in the whole region. After that, I will discuss the results of the study I conducted, which demonstrate the similarity of the patterns of political behaviour and views on politics of Namibian university female and male students. These findings will testify to the effect that female students as other women in the country have gained the ground in the political sphere since independence despite marginalization of university students as a whole from this sphere. In the conclusion, I will show that the paradigm of multiple modernities is much more applicable to the analysis of social change with respect to Namibian women in contrast to evolutionary and modernization theories and theories of globalizing modernity, especially when comparing to what Namibian university students and youth in general have experienced.

6.2 The Women's Role during the Pre-Colonial and Colonial Eras in the Sub-Saharan

Region

The pre-colonial period

Today, few scholars argue that an absolute authority of males over females was innate to the customary gender systems in Sub-Saharan Africa. The opinion that women could exercise some form of control during the pre-colonial period is prevailing. Berger (1999) points out that pre-colonial Sub-Saharan societies varied in the degree to which women had legal and political authority, as well as in the degree of obedience, which was expected from them. For instance, Xhosa and Tswana women in Southern Africa were legal minors during all their lives despite their exercise of the control over the crops they produced (Berger, 1999). In contrast, Tonga women, living in Southern Zambia, had a certain access to political authority due to the control over land and grain production (Parpart, 1988). The factors that affected the access of women to economic and political power included their capacity to accumulate wealth and land (Parpart, 1988) and age (Bauer & Taylor, 2005). In the first case, having wealth and land gave an opportunity to women to exercise control and influence (Parpart, 1988). In the second case, as women got older, they were able to obtain more authority in the community and their families

(Berger, 1999). Backer (1995) believes that in Sub-Saharan communities, women and men occupied positions in different spheres, which constituted a complementary social duality. In other words, they were not perceived hierarchically based on gender¹ (Backer, 1995). Women had autonomy in their areas of responsibility, which could include trading, family affairs, farming, and marketing (Hafkin & Bay, 1976).

In a dual gendered system that existed in many pre-colonial societies, women were involved in organizations and groups separate from men in order to meet women's economic, social and political needs (Moran, 1989). In hierarchical structures, which sometimes co-existed with dual gendered systems, women who were in higher positions represented the interests of women who had a lower status (Ortner, 1981). In addition, many Sub-Saharan societies were known for having female leaders and rulers, or queens (Sweetman, 1984).

According to Fallon (2008), the hierarchical and dual gendered systems sometimes served as a medium of women's mobilization, for they rested on the idea of collective identity, which in essence meant that the concerns of women could be represented only by women. Therefore, women occasionally took part in communal activities and politics. They were also engaged in women's associations, which in some cases maintained links between women across various communities (Fallon, 2008). These associations, which were based on age, culture, kinship, or economic tasks, served two main functions. First, they provided women a psychological sense of self-esteem and group identity. Second, they granted a formal role to women within the community (O'Barr, 1984). With the spread of the missionaries' activities, and later on colonialism, women lost all their advantages.

The colonial period

Western education system first established by the missionaries was used as a medium of promotion of Western household and marital relations, as well as of the "proper" functions of mothers, wives, and daughters (Allman, Geiger, & Musisi, 2002). In other words, this education system was based on the patriarchic conception of women, which was prevalent in Europe at that time (Becker, 1997b). However, not everything that the missionaries did was detrimental for women. As a result of the missionaries' activities, women, for instance, could have an

¹ Robertson and Berger (1986) argue that in pre-colonial societies age was a much more important factor in determining the status than gender.

opportunity to leave a polygamous marriage (Becker, 2010). Today, it is common for Africanists to argue that colonialism undermined balanced relationships between men and women that existed even in patriarchal societies. Colonizers reconstructed gender roles through changes in political representation, laws, and land use, among others (Pankhurst, 2002). In other words, they invented tradition with respect to women.

The court system established in Sub-Saharan Africa upon the advent of colonialism reflected European gender biases in that African women and girls were perceived as subordinate to brothers, fathers, husbands, and traditional leaders. That is to say, the concepts “wife”, “mother”, and “daughter” were redefined to fit better the Western idea of women and their position in the society. Colonizers were also assisted by traditional leaders to systematize customary law, therefore creating invented law that among other functions was intended to establish the authority of men over women (Bay, 2006). Women’s social status significantly worsened with the redefinition of land ownership in favour of men. This limited women’s access to land, as it now depended on their good relationships with fathers, husbands, or brothers (Fallon, 2008). In the pre-colonial times, both women and men were perceived as contributing to their household by means of their work in agriculture (Bujra, 1986). As soon as men became involved in the production of cash crops for colonizers’ needs, they stopped contributing their part to the household. From then on, only women were responsible for subsistence agriculture. This intensified their workload and at the same time limited their access to financial resources as men’s opportunities to take part in the production of cash crops increased. In addition, since women were considered minors, they were not allowed to take part in the affairs of the community. Otherwise, in the colonizers’ view, this would have threatened the customary political and social systems (Kruger, 1996).

As the position of women in rural communities deteriorated, some of them tried to find more opportunities in urban areas. However, colonizers imposed controls on migration of women. The underlying reason was that women were viewed as key actors in the reproduction of labour, which was crucial for the colonial economy based on the exploitation of resources (Bauer & Taylor, 2005; Allman, Geiger, & Musisi, 2002).¹ Women continued to be discriminated against

¹ In the late colonial period (after the World War II), the number of women in urban areas became almost equal to the number of men. Although most of them still worked in the informal sector in such occupations as beer brewing and petty trades, some women began working in the formal sector being hired in food processing factories, factories that produced textiles, and as domestic workers (Berger, 1999).

in the educational field as well. In order to assist administrative structures set by colonizers, schools were established for men in urban areas (Robertson, 1986). Later on, when schools for women were set up, the curriculum was mostly focused on the development of homemaking skills, which further restrained women's opportunities (Fallon, 2008). African men overall supported these reconfigurations since it provided them a chance to exert more control over women in their communities and families (Allman, Geiger, & Musisi, 2002).

As anti-colonial movements formed in most of Sub-Saharan Africa, women started being actively involved in public affairs through demonstrations, mobilization, boycotts, and even through taking part in military activities against colonizers (Waylen, 1994). During the struggle for independence, women sometimes were more susceptible to political mobilization than men because "they had more to fight for and more to gain" (Urdang 1984, p. 161). In addition, their age did not play any role. For instance, in Mozambique there were women guerrillas who were as young as fifteen (Conrwall, 1972).

Women's active participation in nationalist movements was not always supported by the local population. In many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa women encountered resistance (especially initially) mostly from men who resorted to the invented tradition that they represented as an authentic custom to justify their position. However, many women took vigorous efforts to persuade others that they should play a part in the liberation movements. This was often done through public campaigns or direct female actions against colonizers. Women's activity during the struggle for liberation can hardly be considered feminist though since the primary goal of nationalist movements and women who supported it was liberation from colonizers (Urdang, 1984).

6.3 The Role of Sub-Saharan Women after Independence

As it was the case for youth, in the first two decades since independence, women were active in the political life in most Sub-Saharan countries (Parpart, 1988). In addition, they were promised political, social and economic benefits by the newly elected governments (Haynes, 2002). However, soon after, the authoritarian regimes established in various countries in the region reinforced the tradition of women's marginalization invented by colonizers.¹ With time,

¹ In the countries that gained independence later, the situation was not different. During the liberation struggle, nationalist leaders often resorted to women's assistance. Yet, after the independence, women's contribution was quickly forgotten and their role was once again defined within the context of tradition invented during colonialism. For instance, in Angola, men holding top government positions

independent women's organizations or movements became co-opted or controlled by governments (Geisler, 2006), and equal representation of women in state institutions was not implemented (Haynes, 2002). In most Sub-Saharan countries, women's wings of new political parties that won national elections were created allegedly in order to address the concerns of women. In reality, their role was mostly ceremonial. Headed by the wives of presidents and other top-ranked politicians, their role was limited to the unconditional support of the president and his party and glorifying him and his party (Tripp, 2001a). In addition, large women's organizations controlled by the government were created (Waylen, 1994), which aimed at limiting women's activity to the expression of support for the government. Along with women's wings of the ruling parties, these organizations obtained an absolute control over the political space allocated to the representation of women's interests. As a result of the solidification of authoritarian regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa, the creation of an independent female agenda became nearly impossible (Bauer & Taylor, 2005) as independent political activity was hindered (Pankhurst, 2002). In this respect, the tradition invented by colonizers was at times used by political elites to justify the limited position of women in the political sphere.

Apart from the exclusion of independent women's voices from formal politics after the first two decades since independence, women's marginalization in the economic and social realms continued. Since women were not represented in government institutions and the political leadership manipulated the tradition invented by colonizers, issues with respect to gender equality were not represented in state policies (Mikell, 1995). Therefore, governments have never adequately addressed women's marginalization from the formal economy, discrimination in terms of employment and access to resources, as well as a violation of women's social rights, such as the right to education, health, and safe working conditions, and other forms of discrimination (Fallon, 2008).

In the beginning of the 1990s, the situation dramatically changed.¹ First, as democratization started to unfold in the region, the control of women's organizations that were state-run over the political space allocated for women's activity noticeably decreased. This resulted in the formation of various types of women's movements and associations. In addition,

advised women to go back to their families and be good wives and mothers after the country gained independence (Fallon, 2008).

¹ To be sure, since the 1990s there have been occasional calls across the region for the preservation of "customary" roles of women, which in fact are not customary, but are constructed and justified through the invented tradition.

women started participating in the political activities that were not available for them before. For instance, in Malawi, women engaged in rewriting of the constitution (Tripp 2001b). Women also began claiming leadership roles on a broader scale. Over the last two decades, women's appointments in ministries and other state structures have significantly increased. In 2007, women's legislative representation in Sub-Saharan Africa reached 17.4% (in comparison, in 1990 it was only 7.8%). Females were selected to be prime ministers in Senegal, Sao Tome, and Mozambique. The region also finally saw the first female president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia. The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed the launch of women's political parties as well. In addition, the focus of the women's movements has shifted from the activities related to development to the emphasis on the promotion of women's political rights. These movements also started playing an important role in bringing political reforms against corruption and repression by participating in demonstrations and rallies and other political activities (Tripp, n.d.). In many African countries, these movements also began to lobby political parties and governments to implement gender policies and to adopt quotas in political parties and governmental institutions (Geisler, 2006), which has resulted in the alteration of public attitudes towards the position of women in politics. Many people have become or continue becoming more tolerant towards women taking on political leadership roles (Tripp, n.d.).

Southern Africa is the most advanced part of the region in terms of the promotion of women's political representation. Southern African countries signed a protocol, which in the beginning demanded governments to have a minimum of 30% female representation in decision-making positions both in the public and private sectors and now targets for 50% representation by 2015 (SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, 2008). Partly because of this protocol, the representation of women in Southern Africa has been growing. If we look at the percentage of women in National parliaments, for instance, in February of 2010 it was 31.5% in Uganda (versus 17.9% in February of 2000), 44.5% in South Africa (versus 30.0% in February of 2000), 30.7% in Tanzania (versus 16.4% in February of 2000), 39.2% in Mozambique (versus 30.0% in February of 2001), 38.6% in Angola (versus 15.5% in February of 2000), and 26.9% in Namibia (versus 25.0% in February of 2000)¹ (Women in national parliaments, Inter-Parliamentary Union). Yet, women still have a long way to go to acclaim equal positions with men in the political sphere in Southern Africa, as well as in Sub-Saharan Africa in general. Nevertheless, the

¹ For more data on Namibia, see the section called Participation of Namibian Women in Political Decision-Making.

progress over the last two decades has been tremendous.

There are numerous factors accounting for the dramatic change in gender relations in politics that started taking place in Sub-Saharan Africa in the beginning of the 1990s. At the national level, temporal democratization resulted in the disappearance of a fear of the authoritarian rule. As the freedom of speech and association grew, women started having more opportunities to lobby governments with respect to policies that have an effect on women (Fallon, 2008). In addition, more equitable access to education for girls has resulted in the emergence of a significant number of women who were capable of exercising political power (Tripp, n.d.). Another reason of the growing role of women in politics in the last two decades is the realization of threats and possibilities based on the previous experience of women after independence. This time, women did not want to miss their chance to push for women's equality (Pankhurst, 2002). International factors also played a part. They included availability of funding through international good-governance programs (Fallon, 2008) and the existence of various international projects on women in development, which have started being implemented on a larger scale in Sub-Saharan Africa since the beginning of the 1990s.

Perhaps the most important factor of why the change in gender roles in politics happened is because women have historically shared a collective identity and took part in the activities of women's organizations, which formed a custom. According to Moran (1989), over the long regional history Sub-Saharan women have been feeling that they could appreciate each other's problems and concerns better than anyone else because of shared experiences. As a result, women have been drawing on the sense of their collective identity as a group and have been acting in a cohesive manner while dealing with their problems or when approaching the leaders to address their concerns. Indeed, before colonization started, women's organizations already existed across the region. Even though during the colonial times women were subjugated, they did not stop participating in such organizations completely (Fallon, 2008).¹ The same was the case after the first two decades since independence until the 1990s. Since the beginning of the 1990s, women's organizations have often managed not only to restore but to increase their role. Even though democratization began to stall in 1994-1995 across the region, this process continued. Therefore, we can conclude that even though national and international modern Western factors played an important role in improving the position of women in politics, without

¹ However, some community organizations dissipated and others had no choice but to change to please the Europeans (Fallon, 2008).

a customary sense of collective identity the change could not have taken place.

Although we have seen a lot of success in changing the relationships of the political power in Sub-Saharan Africa in favour of women, much less progress has been achieved in terms of gender parity in social and economic spheres. Women continue being underemployed and working more frequently in the informal sector than men. They also earn less than men, and along with youth and elders comprise the poorest part of the population. Even though the progress has been achieved in reducing the gap in school education between males and females in many Sub-Saharan countries, it has not significantly improved life prospects for women. Women also continue being affected by HIV and violence more than men. The tradition invented by colonizers and presented as a custom is still used as an excuse to justify the unequal position of women in society and economy across Sub-Saharan Africa.

As we will see in the next section, the change in Namibian women's roles has been overall similar to the one in the rest of the region, except for the most recent changes. As the country gained independence only in 1990, which coincided with the beginning of democratization across Sub-Saharan Africa, Namibian women did not experience the subjugation by the newly elected government. To explore social change with regard to the position of Namibian women, we have to start first with the pre-colonial period.

6.4 Pre-Colonial and Colonial Times. The Position of Women in Namibia

There is no unanimous view on the role women played in pre-colonial Namibia. For example, Avoseh (n.d.) argues that women in Namibia, as in the rest of Africa, were inferior to men. According to a document by UNAM/SARDC (1997), customary law significantly disadvantaged Namibian women across various ethnic groups. However, Becker (2010) argues that recent historical-anthropological research showed that women in many Namibian pre-colonial communities could access property. Women were also valued as agricultural producers. This was the case in Owambo communities. At the same time, the value socially attributed to the products of males, such as cattle, was high in these communities. This duality is accounted by a mixed character of the economic system, which was based on agriculture and pastoral. In addition, divorces were frequent; and women had no difficulty to obtain it due to the lack of a significant transfer of material goods at marriage. In pre-colonial Namibian societies, women also served the role of healers and were involved in cultural and ritual performances (Becker, 2010). In addition, female rulers were not rare (Becker, 2006). Therefore, Becker concludes that

women were not inferior to men. Instead, men and women inhabited distinguishable spheres in the society, which were complimentary in nature (Becker, 1995). Even though the opinions about the role of women before colonization vary, commentators on Namibia generally agree that during the colonial time the women's position in economic, political, and social spheres worsened because of the tradition of women's subjugation invented by colonizers and few other factors.

Like in other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, due to the male migration to townships women bore a double burden in rural areas. They had to do agricultural work, which in pre-colonial times was done by men. At the same time, the significance of their labour reduced due to the colonial discriminatory practices (Soiri, 1996). The change in power from Germans to South Africans did not result in the improvement of women's lives by any means. According to Margaret Manicom (1992), the term "native" used in the "native" policy conducted by the apartheid government excluded women from the definition. Therefore, women were not seen as "citizens," as "the Africans," or as "workers" (Becker, 2010). The apartheid government enfeebled the traditional extended family system that used to provide economic protection for women. In addition, the development of the contract labour system resulted in further movement of a large number of men from rural to urban areas, which in turn led to women becoming the core providers for other family members in their households. Those women who wanted to move to urban areas for work "required the assistance of their husbands" (*Masters and Servants Act*, cited in Avoseh, n.d.), which made it extremely difficult for women to obtain a contracted job. In the political domain, women were disenfranchised. They were seen as belonging to the private sphere, whereas men belonged in the public sphere.¹ Female rulers were gradually substituted with males in the majority of territories, even though in more atomized and less controlled communities some women managed to keep their positions (for instance, in Sambyu) (Becker, 2006). As a result, women were generally excluded from the decision-making processes in the political realm. Therefore, even though the whole economic, social, and political system at the time was unfair, women bore an additional burden due to the gender-biased rules imposed by colonizers (Avoseh, n.d.) and that formed the invented tradition.

During the struggle for liberation, women were defined and perceived as wives, mothers and sisters by the nationalist movement. Women's self-understanding and self-perception were also determined by these terms. Yet, according to Soiri (1996), they managed to advance new

¹ Initially though, public sphere was confined to European white men only.

roles of power and authority within these patriarchal statuses. Therefore, the liberation struggle overall empowered women. During the armed struggle, women¹ who lived in the North sheltered guerrillas, collected information for SWAPO (Becker, 2010), and provided material assistance (Avoseh, n.d.). Other women ended up in exile with their male counterparts. Over the years, they constituted 20-40% of all the people in exile (in neighbouring countries). Those women in exile who were young, unmarried and who had no children often insisted on obtaining the same military training as male exiles (Bauer & Taylor, 2005). Some other women were trained in male-dominated occupations such as radio/auto mechanics and electronics (LeBeau & Ipinge, 2004). In addition, women exiles had an equal access to training and learning opportunities at UN-founded institutions in neighbouring countries such as Zambia and Angola (Bauer & Taylor, 2005; UNAM/SARDC, 1997). These trends had a noticeable impact on both males and females. Women gained self-confidence and as a result of receiving education were not willing to tolerate subordination to men any more. Instead, they demanded power-sharing at all levels, including the level of politics. Men too gained more respect for women seeing them fighting without fear for the future of the country (Becker, 1995), even though initially many of them were resistant to acknowledge the role of women in the liberation struggle (Becker, 1991).

Within SWAPO itself, women occupied non-conventional positions (Wieringa & Mogotsi, 2000). In particular, there were women fighters and women in the diplomatic circles (LeBeau & Ipinge, 2004). Therefore, men within SWAPO ranks were used to seeing women in high-ranking positions. In the 1970, SWAPO approved an official policy aimed at gender equality primarily because of the increasing number of women in its ranks. In addition, SWAPO Women's Council was established following the initiative of SWAPO male leaders. The opinions of female members of SWAPO were taken into consideration perhaps because they did not question the activities of the organization. Larger inclusion of women in the ranks also benefited the SWAPO's image as a tolerant and all-embracing organization. And it also conformed to the socialist ideological basis of SWAPO at that time (Soiri, 1996).

With independence, the Namibian government had to take unprecedented measures to bring changes in various spheres of life. As in the case of any major transition, the government faced the necessity to alter legal and political relationships that existed in the country before the

¹ Soiri (1996) calls women who assisted SWAPO combats “radical mothers”.

1990s. Some of these significant changes were directly related to gender and women's roles in the new society.

6.5 Legal Reform and Other Government Actions to Address Women's Issues in Post-Independence Namibia

The Constitution adopted in 1990 prohibits any type of discrimination based on sex (Article 10). It also guarantees equality within marriage (Article 14) and encourages affirmative action in order to enable women to play important societal roles. The Constitution also acknowledges the disadvantages women experienced prior to independence (Article 23) and has a stipulation on affirmative action to promote women's rights and equality, even though this is not outlined as imperative (Article 23). In addition, the Constitution calls for the implementation of legislations to guarantee equal opportunities for women as one of core principles of state policy (Article 95). The *Married Persons Equality Act* passed in 1996 legally guarantees equality between women and men in marriage (Bauer, 2006). This act also negates the legal definition of a man as the head of the household and ensures that women have equal access to bank loans (LeBeau & Ipinge, 2004). The new *Traditional Authorities Act* that was passed in 2000 stipulates that one of the functions of traditional leaders is to undertake affirmative action to promote women to leadership positions. However, there are no sanctions or penalties in place for not taking these actions (Traditional Authorities Act, 2000).

A number of other acts and bills were passed as well, such as the *Domestic Violence Act*, which among other things simplifies the process of suing perpetrators (Bauer, 2006) and the *Combating of Rape Bill*, which significantly broadens the definition of rape and guarantees the extensive protection for abused women and girls. The *Communal Land Reform Act* was passed as well, with the intention to provide more access to communal land for women and the protection of property of widows (Muhato, 2003). The new *Labour Act* prohibits discrimination in employment and includes a number of measures for maternity protection. In addition to the domestic legal acts, the government has signed a number of international legal documents promoting gender equality. In 1992 the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of discrimination against Women was ratified by the Namibian Parliament, and in 2004 the Parliament ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa (Hubbard, 2004).

The Namibian government established various institutions to address gender-based

issues, namely the Gender Commission, the Gender Sectoral Committees and the Gender Focal Points in ministries, and the Ministry of Gender Equity and Child Welfare. Various political parties, civil society organizations, donors, and other governmental institutions supported the establishment of these institutions. A number of other ministries deal with gender issues as well such as the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Health and Social Services, and the Ministry of Defence (LeBeau & Ipinge, 2004). In addition, a Woman and Law Committee was established to address gender-related disparities in the legal sphere (Muhato, 2003).

In 1997, a National Gender Policy was established. It provides a framework for addressing women's problems such as socio-economic inequality of women, violence against women, and health problems. In addition, the National Gender Policy guarantees greater participation in politics and decision-making in general for women. It recognizes that fair access to decision-making is indispensable for economic and social development of the country (LeBeau & Ipinge, 2004). The most noticeable changes to institutionalize greater gender equality have been made so far in the provision of equal access to education for both girls and boys and in the representation of women in political positions of power. Fair access to education has resulted in the significant shift in the ratio of students in both primary and secondary schools. According to the statistics by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for Namibia, the ratio for females to males enrolled in primary schools between 2003 and 2008 was 106 for enrolled students and 101 for attending students, whereas for secondary schools for the same period it was 121 for enrolled students and 132 for attending students. Female students also constitute more than 50% of the total number of students at the Polytechnic of Namibia and the University of Namibia. Changes in the position of women in the political sphere will be addressed in detail in the following section.

6.6 Participation of Namibian Women in Political Decision-Making

Bauer (2006) argues that today a unified women's movement is observed in Namibia.¹ This movement formed around a single issue: the lack of representation of women in political leadership roles. According to Bauer (2001), the movement has already contributed to the election and appointment of a large number of women in political office. This movement began

¹ Some authors, however, argue that no strong movement exists in the country (see, for instance, Muhato, 2003).

in 1999 with the establishment of the Namibian Women's Manifesto Network (NWMN) that launched a campaign for a 50% representation of women on party lists. NWMN has been very active across Namibia since that time. For instance, in 2001-2002, it organized more than 100 workshops throughout the country involving more than 3500 people. The major focus of these workshops was on women's political activity. In 2004, NWMN led a campaign in all regions to persuade women to vote and to be candidates for the local authority elections. More than 30 women's groups and 40 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) took part in the event (Frank, 2004). This wide-scaled campaign was unprecedented in the country (Bauer, 2006).

So far, the women's movement has been generally effective in implementing its agenda. For instance, a major shift in electoral representation of women was made in 1999 when all political parties voluntarily conceded to its demand that half of all candidates in national elections must be women (Muhato, 2003). The percent of women in the National Assembly¹ increased after each election. In 1999, it was 22.2% and in the 2004 election, it became 25.0%. In the 2009 election, the percent of women in Parliament further increased to 26.9%, which made Namibia the 32nd country in the world with the largest number of women in the Parliament (Women in national parliaments, Inter-Parliamentary Union).

Women became more represented in other government institutions as well. After the 2004 election, women comprised 25% of the cabinet. In the previous years they mostly held gender-specific portfolios such as the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Minister of Women Affairs and Child Welfare. After 2004, they began to occupy non-traditional positions, namely Deputy Prime Minister, Attorney-General, the Minister of Home Affairs, the Minister of Justice, and the Minister of Finance (Geisler, 2006). What is noticeable is that women comprise approximately 40% of local councilors and two thirds of deputy mayors (Muhato, 2003; LeBeau & Iipinge, 2004). Significant change was achieved in the National Council² election in 2005, which led to seven women becoming members of this chamber of Parliament. In the previous term, women accounted for only two out of 26 members. However, at the regional level, women comprise only about 10% of the regional councilors. There is no quota here and elections are

¹ The National Assembly is the lower chamber of the Namibian Parliament (for more detail, see Appendix 1).

² The National Council is the upper chamber of the country's Parliament (for more detail, see Appendix 1).

held on a constituency basis (Muhato, 2003). At the communal level, some noticeable changes have taken place as well. One of them is that, all across Namibia since the middle of the 1990s, more and more women have been appointed as traditional councilors, headwomen, and senior headwomen. However, their number still remains small. Becker (2010) links this communal change to developments that have taken place in the national politics. The logic that lies behind this change can be summarized as follows: “if one can have women as Government ministers, one can also have them as “traditional leaders” (Becker 2010, p. 194). In addition, women have started participating more actively in community meetings and customary court hearings, and their voices are now often heard (Becker, 2007).

The discussion of gender issues in Namibia would not be complete without looking at how the general public and politicians view the role of women.

6.7 Public Opinion on the Women’s Role in Namibia

There are different accounts of how the Namibian public views the role of women in the society. For instance, Lipinge, Hofne, and Friedman (2004) argue that women are considered to be subordinate to men; they are the ones to take the major responsibility for looking after children and family and are those who should be obedient. According to the authors, this is observed across various social groups in Namibia. Becker (2010) points out that there is a strong sentiment across various Namibian communities that the government is undermining oppressive cultural elements that emerged during the colonial time while also destroying some ingrained invented traditions, namely the “customary” roles of men and women as they are understood by the general public (Becker, 2010). The passing of the *Married Persons Equality Act* in 1996, which equalized the rights of wives and husbands, was preceded by the strong opposition of a number of men who attended public hearings on the draft of the act. The negative attitude was also publicly voiced in call-in radio programs and letters to the editors of newspapers. Male opponents argued that, due to Christianity and African “custom”, which in essence is invented tradition, women and men could not be equal. This kind of invented tradition, according to Becker (2010), distorts history and is solely based on the imagined past. The *Combating of Rape Bill* also produced a lot of controversy during its passage primarily because of the provision to ban marital rape. Male parliamentarians were concerned that it would result in a higher divorce rate since women would go to the police all the time (Becker, 2010). It will not be correct to say though that all Namibian male politicians are biased when it comes to gender. For instance, Sam

Nujoma, the former Namibian president, has been one of the key proponents of women's equality. He has discussed gender issues on multiple occasions and has publicly called for the reduction of violations of women's rights (Becker, 2007). Moreover, miscellaneous laws that address the issue of gender inequality could not be passed if a predominant number of male politicians were gender-biased.

According to the relatively recent representative survey conducted by Research Facilitation Services for the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) in all Namibian regions (Thiel, 2003b), almost 70% of Namibians felt that there should be more women in the leadership positions in the country. What was also found was that a socio-economic status (education, gender, urban/rural location, and employment) did not affect people's attitudes towards women's representation in the political sphere. In another survey conducted for IPPR in 2003, 81% of respondents agreed with the statement that in a country like Namibia it is important "to have equal numbers of men and women as candidates" in elections (Thiel, 2003a). Becker's studies in rural communities¹ in 1997 showed that there is widespread opinion among both men and women that women should have a voice in the judicial and political traditional authority structures and that women can be traditional leaders; the opposing view was hardly voiced at all. However, some men covertly opposed the appointment of women to the position of traditional leaders and more active participation of women in decision-making. For instance, several women in Ongandjera complained that men have a fear that women would "colonize" them if women continue to take up the leadership roles (Becker, 2006).

In the following section, the problems that Namibian women continue to face today are described. It is acknowledged that despite a noticeable progress in addressing women's inequality in politics achieved due to the activity of women's organizations, NGOs, and the government, numerous challenges still exist.

6.8 Current Gender Issues

According to the research conducted by Debie LeBeau and Eunice Iipinge (2004), the majority of women in Namibia's capital city of Windhoek believe that the socio-economic status of women has significantly improved since independence. At the same time, many rural women,

¹ Four regions were chosen for the study, namely Omusati, Omaheke, Hardap, and Okavango (Becker, 1997a).

on the contrary, think that they have been generally forgotten compared to women living in urban areas. In other words, rural women perceive an imbalance in the provision of services and access to goods in urban and rural areas. Due to the fact that in rural areas women considerably outnumber men, most subsistence farmers are women. Because of customary law, they encounter numerous difficulties in getting access to various kinds of resources needed for successful agriculture such as cattle and land. Access to credit and technical training is limited as well (Muhato, 2003). Another problem, related to the urban/rural divide is that most of the women who are active in women's organizations and who are concerned with women's empowerment are educated middle-class women who reside in urban areas, whereas many rural women who do not have any opportunities for income generation or postsecondary education are not well familiar with what their urban counterparts are fighting for or dealing with (Becker, 1995; Avoseh, n.d.).

Violence, sexual assaults, and abuse against women and girls continue to be serious issues in spite of legal changes, information campaigns launched by the government and NGOs, and other activities.¹ This is partly because of the cultural delusion that having sex with a virgin can cure a man of HIV. Another reason is that enforcement officers do not have a sufficient capacity to deal with abused women. At the same time, the activity of NGOs is primarily limited to urban areas (Muhato, 2003). The character of the society, which still has violent tendencies because of the war that lasted for 25 years and because of the consistent humiliation of Namibian people's dignity during the colonial rule, also explains widespread violence. According to Becker (2010), "dual gender projections have amplified the masculine (self)-image of aggressiveness, combined with much emphasis on physical force and a general feeling of male supremacy" (p. 191). This attitude of male supremacy was strengthened in recent years because of frustration caused by unfulfilled expectations that economic and social issues encountered by black Namibians would be rapidly solved after independence (Avoseh, n.d.; Becker, 1995).

Even though all types of discrimination against women are prohibited in the Constitution and other legal documents, upper management positions continue to be dominated by men (Global Sistergoods, n.d.). Women are extremely underrepresented in parastatals² except

¹ For more detailed description of these activities see Becker, 2010 and Anti-Discrimination Committee experts welcome Namibia's steps..., 2007.

² Only about 8% of the upper management in parastatals are women (LeBeau & Ipinge, 2004).

educational parastatals, where more than a third of management and administrative staff are women. Apart from that, women are not represented well in councils, commissions, and boards both in private and public sectors. For instance, only two of 10 public sector boards are chaired by women, whereas in the private sector one in five boards is chaired by a woman (LeBeau & Ipinge, 2004). Furthermore, many women work in the informal sectors where there is almost no legal protection. This increases women's vulnerability to poverty and sexual assault and, as a result, to the exposure to HIV (Muhato, 2003). Today, Namibian women account for approximately 55% of people who have HIV/AIDS. At the same time, the number of young women (15-24 years old) living with HIV is almost twice as high as the number of young men who live with it (Reimann, n.d.).

Even though the *Communal Land Reform Act* was passed, traditional authorities often ignore the rights of a widow to inherit land, which would have had belonged to her husband. In addition, customary marriages are discriminatory towards women. Legal registration is not required, and a husband can merge his wife's property into his possession (OECD Development Center, 2009). The problem that persists is that only Roman-Dutch civil law has been changed to accommodate the interests of women. At the same time, no significant changes have been made in customary law. Moreover, contradictions between women's rights and customary law practiced in different communities have rarely been discussed by the Namibian public and have not been addressed by the government (Becker, 2010).

In spite of the efforts of prominent female activists and the government, some Namibian women continue to encounter problems in exercising their political rights. Primarily, it has to do with the invented tradition with regard to women's roles still existent in the Namibian society. In addition, LeBeau and Ipinge (2004) believe the level of political influence exercised by women occupying political leadership positions is still small. The World Campaign International argues that women in the positions of power will not speak out on gender issues unless their number reaches a "critical mass." If this does not happen, women will act in the same way as their male counterparts (Women's Campaign International, 2003). Yet, Becker (2010) argues that "gender equality is very much part of the national political discourse in independent Namibia" (p. 186). Consequently, with the respective laws and other legal documents in place and with the support of civil society organizations, the women's movement, governmental institutions, and influential politicians, we can expect further growth in women's participation in political matters.

In the next section, male and female university students' political behaviour and opinions about selected political issues are compared based on the results of the study I conducted in Namibia in 2009. The findings will show how social change in gender relations in the political sphere has affected university students.

6.9 Research Findings: University Female Students and Politics

The results of my study demonstrated no significant difference in the political behaviour of female and male students, as well as in their attitudes, values and beliefs with regard to politics. To be sure, this does not necessarily testify to the effect that there is a full-blown equality between these two groups in the political sphere. However, we can say that their position is similar. In essence, this means that female university students as a part of the female population have strengthened their position in the formal political sphere compared to the colonial time despite the disadvantaged position of students as a whole. Before I start discussing the results, it has to be mentioned that Namibian university female students are not necessarily representative of the whole female population, even though they may share similar political views and behaviour with other women. However, by focusing on females studying at the university we can gain insight into how some women behave and think with regard to Namibian political sphere.

A bivariate analysis (see for more information Appendix 4, p. 150) showed that gender does not have any statistically significant influence on political activity of university students in Namibia. In 2008, male students participated slightly more than their female counterparts in the following activities: working with others in the community on solving a community problem (37.8% of male students versus 33.2% of female students); contacting/writing to governmental officials (local/extra-local) on the individual issues (11.5% versus 9.0%); writing a letter or viewpoint on political issue(s) to a journal/newspaper (13.6% versus 10.4%); consulting local/regional/national officials on a public issue (13.4% versus 12.5%); and collaborating with officials on solving a public issue (11.3% versus 9.8%). At the same time, female students participated more actively in demonstrations, rallies, and marches (18.0% of female students versus 14.2% of male students). They also contacted government officials on local/regional/national issues more than male students (7.1% versus 5.4%) (see Table 6.1, p. 95).

These results are consistent with the 2003 findings by Thiel (2003b) in Namibia, which showed that men and women participate in politics in a similar manner.¹

¹ A national survey conducted in the form of face to face interviews by Research Facilitation Services for the Institute of Public Policy Research in Windhoek involved 2,000 Namibians who were at least 18 years old. The percentage of women was 55.6%, whereas the percentage of men was 44.4%. In addition, 38% interviewees were urban residents, whereas 62% of interviewees lived in rural areas (Thiel, 2003b).

Table 6.1 Responses of male and female students to the question, “Have you personally done any of these things during the past year?”

| | Working with others in your community on solving a community problem | | Contacting/writing to governmental officials on the individual issue(s) | | Writing a letter or viewpoint on political issue(s) to a newspaper | | Consulting local/regional/national officials on a public issue | | Participating in lawful demonstrations, rallies, marches | | Collaborating with local/regional/national officials on solving a public issue | | Contacting/writing to governmental officials on local/regional/national issue(s) | |
|--|--|--------------|---|--------------|--|--------------|--|--------------|--|--------------|--|--------------|--|--------------|
| | Male % | Fem % | Male % | Fem % | Male % | Fem % | Male % | Fem % | Male % | Fem % | Male % | Fem % | Male % | Fem % |
| Yes, I've done it | 37.8 | 33.2 | 11.5 | 9.0 | 13.6 | 10.4 | 13.4 | 12.5 | 14.2 | 18.0 | 11.3 | 9.8 | 5.4 | 7.1 |
| No, but would do if I had a chance | 39.4 | 43.4 | 31.9 | 35.5 | 29.0 | 29.2 | 33.2 | 30.3 | 24.1 | 19.6 | 39.4 | 39.0 | 39.1 | 35.3 |
| No, but would do under certain circumstances | 11.8 | 15.7 | 31.1 | 33.4 | 26.0 | 31.3 | 24.1 | 31.9 | 23.6 | 26.9 | 23.3 | 30.5 | 26.5 | 30.7 |
| No, and I would never do this | 5.9 | 4.2 | 18.5 | 17.5 | 22.0 | 24.6 | 18.8 | 19.2 | 27.6 | 30.3 | 16.4 | 15.4 | 19.3 | 22.3 |
| Missing data | 5.1 | 3.5 | 7.0 | 4.6 | 9.4 | 4.6 | 10.5 | 6.1 | 10.5 | 5.2 | 9.7 | 5.4 | 9.7 | 4.6 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

As for the intention to vote, there was no difference in case of presidential election that was held in fall of 2009. Some 55.8% of male students and 55.9% of female students said that they were going to vote. On the other hand, more male students chose to take part in the National Assembly election, which was also held in 2009 (41.0% versus 35.1%). However, as the question on civil duty in relation to voting showed, female students generally have a stronger commitment to voting than their male counterparts. The percent of students who said that they did not participate in any political activity in 2008 and would never do so was almost the same for both groups. In case of some political activities (working with others in your community on solving a community problem; collaborating with local/regional/national officials on solving a public issue; contacting/writing to governmental officials on the individual issue(s)), male students were slightly more negative than female students; in other cases (writing a letter or viewpoint on political issue(s) to a journal/newspaper; consulting local/regional/national officials on a public issue; participating in lawful demonstrations, rallies, marches; contacting/writing to governmental officials on local/regional/national issue(s); and writing a letter or viewpoint on political issue(s) to a journal/newspaper), it was the opposite.

When asked the questions on their attention to politics and government, no significant difference was found. Agreeing with the statement, “I am not interested in politics” were 28.2% of male and 32.1% of female students, while 17.4% of male and 14.6% of female students agreed with the statement, “I really dislike politics and government” (see Table 6.2, p. 97).

Table 6.2 Female and male students' responses to the statements on the attention to politics and government

| | I am not interested in politics | | I really dislike politics and government | |
|-------------------|--|--------------|---|--------------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Agree | 28.2 | 32.1 | 17.4 | 14.6 |
| Somewhat agree | 16.9 | 18.0 | 15.0 | 21.3 |
| Not sure | 5.4 | 9.2 | 6.4 | 10.6 |
| Somewhat disagree | 14.2 | 12.5 | 18.5 | 18.6 |
| Disagree | 33.2 | 26.9 | 41.3 | 34.2 |
| Missing data | 2.1 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 0.8 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Male students (49.9%) were found to more actively participate in the discussions on politics with their close friends and give their opinions than were female students (39.9%). However, when it comes to discussions with family members, the difference is much less significant (39.7% of male students versus 35.7% of female students). This is explained by the overall distribution of answers. In the case of the question on discussions with friends, 18.6% of female students versus 11.8% of male students indicated that their close friends do not talk about politics, whereas in the case of discussing political matters with family members, only 8.4% of female students, compared to 10.7% of male students, said that their family members do not discuss political issues. Therefore, if we assume that close friends of female students are mostly females and that male students' close friends are for the most part males, we can conclude that female students indeed tend to be less active in political discussions than their male counterparts.

Female students were found to be more active in civic organizations than male students (29.9% versus 26.8%) (see Table 6.3, p 98). On the other hand, in political organizations, male students are slightly more active. Some 22.5% of male students said that they have membership with some political organization compared to 19.2% of female students (Table 6.4, p. 98).

Table 6.3 Female and male students’ responses to the question, “Are you a member of any non- political organization?”

| Membership in non-political organization(s) | Male % | Female % |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|
| Yes | 26.8 | 29.9 |
| No | 68.4 | 67.2 |
| Missing data | 4.8 | 2.9 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Table 6.4 Female and male students’ responses to the question “Are you a member of any political organization?”

| Membership in political organization(s) | Male % | Female % |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|
| Yes | 22.5 | 19.2 |
| No | 70.8 | 77.7 |
| Missing data | 6.7 | 3.1 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Shirin Rai (1996) argues that what differentiates women in Western countries or regions from women in non-Western countries or regions is that the latter are disengaged from the state in various ways. Accordingly, women do not have sufficient political knowledge, do not think that their actions in the formal political sphere can be effective, and do not trust or support government institutions and officials. In addition, Inglehart and Norris (2003) point out that in non-Western countries or regions women are less conservative than men, which means that they are less pro-state. As it was found in my study, this may not necessarily be the case for Namibian women who study at the university. Slightly more female students than male students thought that the president, members of Parliament, and regional and local authority councilors are very interested in their personal well-being (28.6% of female students versus 27.9% of male students

for the president; 14.0% versus 10.2% for members of Parliament; 12.9% versus 10.5% for regional councilors; and 13.1% versus 10.7% for local authority councilors). In the case of trust in government officials, the results were comparable. Except for the president, whom more male students than female students always trust (28.7% of male students versus 21.9% of female students), the answers of two groups of students were almost the same. A crucial difference observed in the responses to both questions on trust and the interest in personal well-being was in how male and female students viewed traditional leaders. Fewer female students trust traditional leaders and think that traditional leaders are interested in their personal well-being. For example, only 13.8% of female students said that they always trust traditional leaders, whereas 19.0% of male students chose this opinion. As for the interest in personal well-being, 19.0% of females said that traditional leaders are very interested in their personal well-being. In contrast, 24.1% of male students chose this answer. This does not conform to the results of the Afrobarometer round 4 conducted in Namibia in 2008 (Afrobarometer. Summary of Results, Namibia 2008). The population of this study was composed of both males and females from all 13 regions. In this survey, no significant difference was found in answers to the questions on traditional leaders between these two groups. In other words, both females and males trust traditional leaders to the same extent. It also does not conform to the study by Logan (2008), who found that women in Sub-Saharan Africa were more supportive, although slightly, of traditional leaders than men. We can conclude that university female students in Namibia are more critical of traditional leaders than other females perhaps due to the information about social issues they receive at their respective universities or due to critical thinking skills developed as a result of the university education.

Interestingly, the 9% difference between male and female students in the support of the ruling party was found. Some 39.2% of female students said that they were going to vote for SWAPO in the 2009 election compared to 30.6% of male students. Conversely, 19.0% of male students expressed the intention to vote for RDP, the opposition party, whereas only 9.8% of female students shared this view (see Table 6.5, p. 100).

Table 6.5 Female and male students’ responses to the question “Namibia has elections this year, which party will you vote for?”

| Political parties | Male % | Female % |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|
| Monitor Action Group (MAG) | 0.5 | 0.0 |
| Congress of Democrats (CoD) | 0.3 | 1.5 |
| United Democratic Front (UDF) | 0.3 | 1.0 |
| South West African National Union (SWANU) | 0.8 | 0.2 |
| All People’s Party (APP) | 1.1 | 0.6 |
| South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) | 30.6 | 39.2 |
| Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP) | 19.0 | 9.8 |
| Republican Party (RP) | 0.8 | 0.6 |
| National Unity Democratic Party (NUDO) | 1.3 | 1.7 |
| Democratic Turnhalle Alliance of Namibia (DTA) | 0.3 | 0.8 |
| Namibia Democratic Movement for Change (NDMC) | 0.3 | 0.2 |
| I refuse to answer | 15.5 | 15.7 |
| I will not vote | 20.4 | 18.6 |
| I don’t know | 6.7 | 9.0 |
| Missing data | 2.1 | 1.2 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Therefore, in some cases women can be closer to the government and the state than men are. This comes as no surprise in the light of the discussion of the efforts of the Namibian government, which is mostly comprised of the members of the ruling party, to increase women’s equality. Nevertheless, if we look at students’ responses to the question on government legitimacy, there is the opposite tendency, especially when the students were asked whether they agree with the statement, “The Namibian government was elected by accepted procedures.” The percentage of males who agreed was 66.8% compared to 58.0% of female students. In the case of three other statements (“The Constitution expresses values and aspirations of all Namibians,” “the Namibian government exercises power in acceptable ways,” and “the Namibian government

has a right to make decisions that bind all citizens”), the difference was smaller ranging from 2.7% to 6.9%. Some 49.9% of male students and 43.0% of female students agreed with the statement on the Namibian Constitution. As for the statement on the fair exercise of power by the government, combined 62.0% of male and 55.9% of female students either agreed or somewhat agreed with it. Finally, 51.5% of male and 46.3% of female students felt that the government can make decisions binding all Namibian citizens. Therefore, there were mixed results observed in the attitudes of female university students towards the Namibian government. In some cases, they showed higher support for it than their male counterparts. In other cases, we see the opposite tendency.

There was no significant difference in how politically effective male and female students viewed themselves to be.¹ For instance, 19.2% of female and 23.3% of male students said that they can make a great deal of difference at the national level. Some 15.5% of female students and 22.3% of male students said that they can bring lots of changes at the regional level. As for the community level, 42.0% of females and 44.2% of males shared the view that they can make a difference in solving the most prominent problems in their communities. An equal number of female and male students gave correct answers to the following questions: “Who is the Prime Minister currently?” and “What does the Parliament of Namibia do?” These questions were used to measure the political knowledge of students. Some 94.4% of male students and 96.4% of female students expressed the view that Nahas Angula was the prime minister. At the same time, 3.8% of male and 3.6% of female students gave the correct answer that the functions of the Parliament of Namibia included legislating and overseeing the government, which was the correct answer. However, if we look at the responses to the third question (“Who is a Chairperson of The National Council of Namibia?”), we can find a discrepancy between female and male students. Only 14.0% of female students chose the right name (Asser Kuveri Kapere) in contrast to 26.5% of male students who gave the same answer. Since I asked only three questions to measure political knowledge, it is hard to make a solid judgement whether female or male students have more political knowledge. Further research is needed to determine that. To summarize, no significant difference in the political behaviour of university male and female students was found. With few exceptions, such as the discrepancy in attitudes towards traditional

¹ Similar results were found by Bratton and Logan (2006), who used data from Afrobarometer round 2 for fifteen Sub-Saharan countries including Namibia.

leaders and SWAPO versus RDP, the same can be said about university students' opinions regarding various political issues.

Focus groups demonstrated similar results. It was found that both male and female students are interested in politics and are politically active to the same extent. One female student in particular was very enthusiastic. Death threats that she received did not stop her from continuing being active in RDPYL. Another female student said that in 2008 she consulted her traditional leader on some socio-economic issues. Therefore, we can conclude that in some Namibian communities, gender biases in the relationships between the public and traditional leaders are not very visible. Also, another female student noted that since independence, women, including her, have been feeling more empowered as they can now vote, voice their opinions, and participate in other political activities.

6.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I focused on the second theme that is a growing role of Namibian women in the political sphere, which shows that Namibia is characterized by alternative modernity. In contrast to students and youth, who became marginalized from the sphere of politics soon after independence in Namibia, as well as in the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa, women have started playing an increasingly larger role in this sphere since the beginning of the 1990s. This has happened despite occasional references to the tradition of women's subjugation, which was invented in the late pre-colonial and colonial times, made by some (primarily by males). Both internal and external factors have accounted for women playing a larger role since the beginning of the 1990s such as more equitable access to education for girls and temporal democratization. Yet, without a sense of collective identity, which made women feel that nobody can represent their concerns better than themselves due to the common experiences they share and the associated formation of various women's organizations, this change perhaps could not have taken place. The feelings of collective identity and women's organizations have been historically characteristic of Sub-Saharan region as a whole and they formed a custom during the pre-colonial era. Based on the data I collected in April-May 2009, it was demonstrated that Namibian male and female students, as a part of the general public, have similar views on politics, as well as similar patterns of political activity. This means that even though overall university students

and youth have been marginalized from the political sphere, female university students have gained more status as a part of the female population.

In contrast to evolutionary and modernization theories and theories of globalizing modernity, the paradigm of alternative modernities, which I employed to evaluate social change with regard to the role of women in the Namibian political sphere, helps redefine the connections between invented traditions, customs, and the modern Western condition, therefore negating the dichotomy of “modern” versus “traditional”. The paradigm also allows seeing that social change is not simply a transition from one less progressive stage to another more progressive stage. In fact, when comparing the role of university students and youth in general with regard to the political sphere and the role of women in the same sphere we see the opposite tendencies. The paradigm of multiple modernities also provides an opportunity to demonstrate how different Namibian modernity is compared to the ideal type of the Western modern and modernities observed in various societies. Therefore, it negates a totality perspective of Western modernity in the world.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Drawing on the paradigm of multiple modernities, I suggested that Namibia has its own type of the modern as a result of distinctive social change in political and social spheres that has taken place over the last one hundred fifty years. This phenomenon is mostly noticeable in how customs, invented traditions, and the modern Western condition have interrelated. In this case study, I chose to focus on two distinctive trends to analyze social change in Namibia and to demonstrate that alternative modernity exists in this country. These trends were the closure of the political sphere for students and young people as a whole versus the growing role of women in the political sphere.

As it was shown, the position of students and youth in general has changed significantly over time in Namibia, as it happened in many other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. During the pre-colonial era, the inferior role Namibian young people played in the society was determined by customs. In the late pre-colonial and colonial eras, customs continued being used by traditional leaders to exercise control over youth. At the same time, the modern Western condition, which included waged labour, Western education, and urbanization and which was the consequence of the activity of missionaries, Germans and South Africans, started having an effect on youth's standing in the society. To a certain extent, the modern Western provided some economic and personal freedom to young people. It was the struggle for liberation, however, which temporarily equalized the position of youth with other social groups. Yet, soon after the country gained independence, young people became marginalized from the political sphere and the public space in general as a result of growing authoritarianism and the failure of economic and social youth policies and a subsequent invention of tradition in the form of the liberation struggle ethos by high-ranking politicians. As my research on Namibian university students showed, the exclusion from the political sphere has resulted in many consequences such as a feeling of political ineffectiveness, a low level of politic activity, a sense of dissatisfaction with politics, fear, ethnic marginalization, participation in politics for the purpose of obtaining economic benefits, and a largely non-political educational environment.

In contrast to the conditions students and youth in general find themselves in, Namibian women have been playing an increasingly larger role in the political sphere since independence.

This has taken place despite the occasional references to the tradition invented in the late pre-colonial and colonial eras made by some people (primarily males). This invented tradition placed women at the lowest level of the social hierarchy marginalizing them from social, economic, and political spheres. Various external and internal factors have played a role in the positive change with respect to the position of Namibian women in the political realm since the beginning of the 1990s, including temporal democratization, more equitable access to education for girls, and equality between men and women during the struggle for liberation. Yet, without the sense of collective identity, which made women feel that no one can represent their concerns more effectively than themselves because of the common experiences they all share and the related formation of various women's organizations, this change could perhaps not have happened. Women's organizations and the feeling of collective identity have historically characterized Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole and they formed a custom during the pre-colonial era. It was shown that despite the marginalization of students in general from the political sphere since independence, female students as a part of female population have gained, which is reflected in their patterns of political activity and political views.

In this work, I suggested that social change that has taken place in Namibia cannot be explained by evolutionary and modernization theories and theories of globalizing modernity. These theories maintain that there are inevitable tensions between the "modern" and the "traditional" (Macamo, 2005; Mitchell, 2000). In addition, they do not consider invented tradition and do not provide a voice to the Others. Instead, they propose that all societies change in a unilinear direction or become the same while customs gradually diminish and then completely disappear. In particular, modernization theories argue that as societies are undergoing change and moving to more "advanced" stages, the customary withers away and the modern Western condition extends. And, as theories of globalizing modernity argue, due to globalization Western modernity is becoming universalized around the world. As it was shown in this work, this is not the case; and the paradigm of multiple modernities helped explain why. By employing the conceptual and analytical frameworks based on this paradigm, it was possible to localize social change within certain time and space. In particular, I was able to assess social change in Namibian political and social spheres over the years with a more detailed focus on the period after independence. By incorporating the phenomenon of invented tradition into the analysis of social change in the country, it became possible to reconsider a dichotomy of "modern" and

“traditional” and see the complexity of social change, which is most visible in the lack of unilinear developments and in the effects of various internal and external factors. Another advantage of the paradigm of multiple modernities compared to the mentioned theories is that it allows evaluating in the critical manner Namibian modernity compared to the ideal type of the Western modern and modernities, which characterize some other societies, therefore negating the totality of Western modernity in the world. Thus, the paradigm allows for a more sensitive approach to the study of social change as it provides a voice to the Others.

My work has some limitations. First, I focused only on two themes trying to demonstrate that Namibia has its own type of the modern. Further work on other trends observed in the country is needed to substantiate this claim more fully. The second limitation is that I was a researcher from Russia living in the West who made a decision to conduct research in the African country I had never visited before. This probably had some impact on how I saw the events that took place in Namibia and how I analyzed data. I tried to minimize potential effects by avoiding Western biases as much as possible without running into Afrocentrism at the same time. Third, I did not attempt to compare Namibian modernity to other modernities observed in the world since no typology of modernities has been developed so far. Much more research is needed to determine similarities and differences between modernity in Namibia and modernities in other societies.

My research has a number of implications. First, the emphasis on alternative modernity in Namibia is theoretically and methodologically appealing taking into account the fact that in academia and beyond it the differences existent in the country and the region of Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole have often been treated as “anachronic relic” and as “a symptom of backwardness” (Ferguson, 2006). Second, the validity of the idea of alternative modernity that exists in Namibia requires more elaborate attention to the national specificities on the part of international agencies such as international financial institutions that design any sorts of programs for the country. These programs should not bear a uniform character, nor be implemented in the same manner in Namibia as in other countries or regions across the globe. It has to be recognized that each region or country is unique and therefore requires a special approach. Third, the idea of multiple modernities can significantly enrich the debates among intellectuals, politicians, and the general public, since it enables African countries, including Namibia, to re-appropriate their vernacular resources without putting into question the relevance

of the modern as such (Sachsenmaier, 2002). Fourth, in the world that we live in today, sensitive research becomes extremely important. Sensitivity is reflected in the choice of research methods and research subjects and the use of concepts and categories, among others. Higher priority must be given to mixed methods and innovative methods such as participatory research and photovoice. As demonstrated in my work, employment of mixed methods avoids limitations of each individual research method and provides a broad, and at the same time detailed, picture of the phenomena that is the subject of a case study analysis. As for the choice of research subjects, more attention has to be paid to so-called developing countries and disadvantaged social groups residing in those countries in order to represent and popularize perspectives of the Others. Finally, categories and concepts have to be employed in a way that will avoid Western biases as much as possible. In this sense, the paradigm of multiple modernities is useful, as it gives a voice to the Others without dismissing commonalities that exist among societies. Fifth, scholars studying multiple modernities have to pay more attention to developing a valid classification of alternative modernities. This will strengthen the position of the paradigm of alternative modernities since it will be possible to make solid comparisons among various modernities in addition to the comparison of a particular modernity with the ideal type of Western modernity. Sixth, the phenomenon of invented tradition and other effects of colonialism and apartheid have to be considered when one analyzes alternative modernity in Namibia. Without the examination of these effects the study of this modernity will not be complete. Seventh, more research is needed to identify whether Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole is characterized by an alternative type of the modern. Finally, in this work, I attempted to prove the thesis that alternative modernity exists in Namibia based on the literature review and data I collected. In contrast to the fields of anthropology and cultural studies, empirical sociological, gender and political science research on multiple modernities is lacking. Without a doubt, much more attention has to be devoted to the applied sociological, political science, and gender study of alternative modernities.

All in all, the paradigm of multiple or alternative modernities is valuable for the analysis of social change, for it provides an opportunity to increase understanding and can contribute to building more balanced connections between the Western and the non-Western. It also helps increase equality, question the whole idea of exclusiveness and betterness, and make us realize that we are indeed just an “other” among others. These are important contributions that the

paradigm of multiple modernities makes in the turbulent and often divided world that we live in today.

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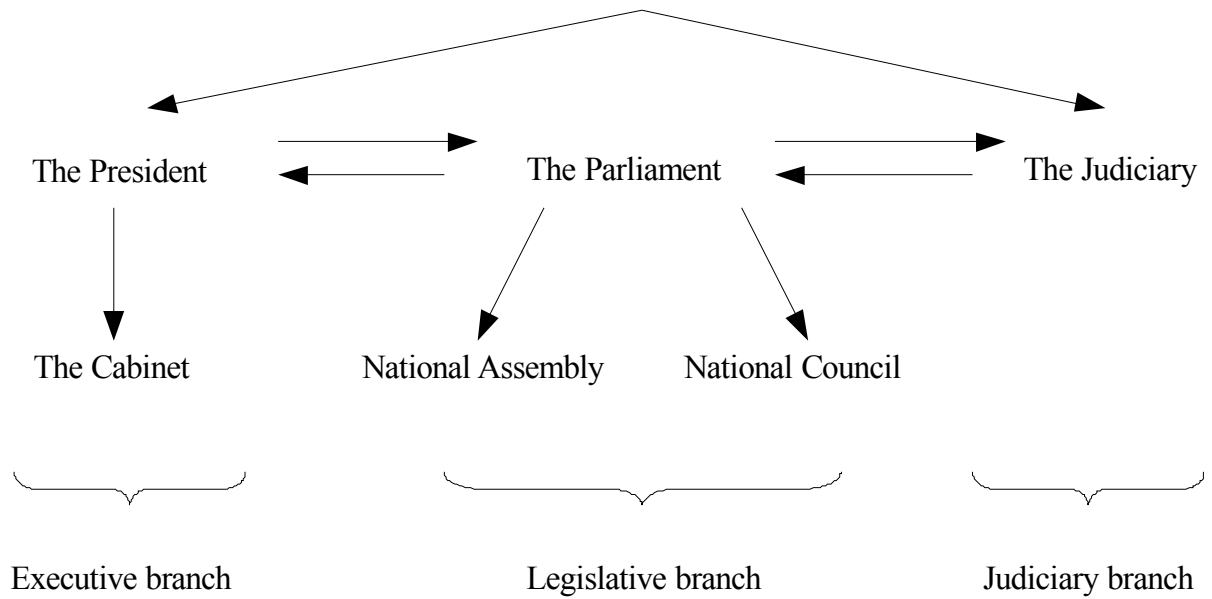
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Appendix 1

Relationships of the constitutional bodies in Namibia



Appendix 2

Questionnaire

Part 1 – In this part of a survey we ask you to answer three general questions about politics.

1. What is the first word that comes to your mind when you hear the word POLITICS:

1.2 Which of the following statements represents your opinion about democracy in Namibia?

- 1) Namibia is not a democracy
- 2) Namibia is a democracy with some major problems
- 3) Namibia is a democracy with some minor problems
- 4) Namibia is a complete democracy
- 5) I don't know

1.3 How would you rate your satisfaction with democracy in Namibia?

- 1) Very satisfied
- 2) Fairly satisfied
- 3) Not very satisfied
- 4) Not at all satisfied
- 5) Namibia is not a democracy
- 6) I don't know

Part 2 – In the following questions we are concerned with your attitudes, values, and beliefs in relation to politics.

2.1 Which of the following political officials are interested/not interested in your personal well-being? (*choose one answer for each political official or a group of officials*)

| | Very interested | Interested | Fairly Interested | Not interested | I don't know |
|----------------------------|-----------------|------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------|
| The president | | | | | |
| Members of Parliament | | | | | |
| Regional councilors | | | | | |
| Local authority councilors | | | | | |
| Traditional Leaders | | | | | |

2.2 For each of the following statements choose the extent to which you agree, or disagree:

| | Agree | Somewhat agree | Not sure | Somewhat disagree | Disagree |
|--|-------|----------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
| The Namibian government was elected by accepted procedures | | | | | |
| The Constitution expresses values and aspirations of all Namibians | | | | | |
| The Namibian government exercises power in acceptable ways | | | | | |
| The Namibian government has a right to make decisions that bind all citizens | | | | | |

2.3 For each of the following political officials choose the extent to which you trust or do not trust them? *(choose one answer for each political official or a group of officials)*

| | Always trust | Trust most of the time | Sometimes trust | Rarely trust | Never trust | I don't know |
|----------------------------|--------------|------------------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| The president | | | | | | |
| Members of Parliament | | | | | | |
| Regional councilors | | | | | | |
| Local authority councilors | | | | | | |
| Traditional Leaders | | | | | | |

2.4 How many officials do you think take bribes in the following institutions? *(choose one answer for each institution)*

| | Almost all | Most | Some | Almost none | None | I don't know |
|-----------------------|------------|------|------|-------------|------|--------------|
| The cabinet | | | | | | |
| The Parliament | | | | | | |
| Civil service | | | | | | |
| Your local government | | | | | | |

2.5 Please choose an answer for each of the following statements:

| | Agree | Somewhat agree | Not sure | Somewhat disagree | Disagree |
|--|-------|----------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
| I often do “my own thing” | | | | | |
| I like my privacy | | | | | |
| What happens to me is my own doing | | | | | |
| One should live one’s life independently of others | | | | | |

2.6 Which of the following political officials do you think are interested in the well-being of your community? (*choose one answer for each political official or a group of officials*)

| | Very interested | Interested | Fairly Interested | Not interested | I don’t know |
|----------------------------|-----------------|------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------|
| The president | | | | | |
| Members of Parliament | | | | | |
| Regional councilors | | | | | |
| Local authority councilors | | | | | |
| Traditional Leaders | | | | | |

2.7 Are you willing to permit the following groups of people to live in your country/community/neighbourhood/ next door to you? (*indicate **yes** or **no** for each group in all four locations*)

| | Your country | Your community | Your neighbourhood | Next door to you |
|-------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Ethnic minorities | | | | |
| Immigrants | | | | |
| Gays and lesbians | | | | |

2.8 Which of the following statements do you agree with the most?

- 1) In some circumstances a non-democratic government can be preferable to a democratic one
- 2) It does not matter what kind of government is in power
- 3) A democratic government is preferable to any other kind of government
- 4) I don't know

2.9 Please choose an answer for each of the following statements:

| | Agree | Somewhat agree | Not sure | Somewhat disagree | Disagree |
|--|-------|----------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
| I like sharing things with my neighbours | | | | | |
| If a relative were in financial difficulty, I would help within my means | | | | | |
| I feel good when I cooperate with others | | | | | |
| My happiness depends very much on the happiness of those around me | | | | | |

2.10 Which of the following statements do you agree with the most?

- 1) Government by a strong leader would be preferable to democracy under certain circumstances
- 2) Democracy should be always preferable if even the country does not have a strong leader
- 3) For me it does not matter
- 4) I don't know

5) 2.11 Please choose an answer for each of the following statements:

| | Agree | Somewhat agree | Not sure | Somewhat disagree | Disagree |
|---|-------|----------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
| A person should have access to education <i>only</i> if he/she can afford it | | | | | |
| Everyone should have adequate nutrition no matter what income they have | | | | | |
| A person should have access to first-class health system <i>only</i> if he/she can pay for it | | | | | |
| Everyone should have access to legal aid regardless of how much they earn | | | | | |

2.12 Who is the Prime Minister currently?

- 1) Den Ulenga
- 2) Kuaima Garoeb
- 3) Nahas Angula
- 4) Chibo Ganaseb
- 5) I don't remember / I don't know

2.13 What does the Parliament of Namibia do? (*choose as many as apply*)

- 1) It legislates
- 2) It executes the law
- 3) It oversees the government
- 4) I don't know / I don't remember

2.14 Who is the chairperson of The National Council of Namibia?

- 1) Theo-Ben Gurirab
- 2) Lownan Shinyemba
- 3) Nickey Iyambo
- 4) Asser Kuveri Kapere
- 5) I don't remember / I don't know

Part 3 – In this part of a survey I am interested in your opinion about some issues related to politics.

3.1 Under what circumstances do you believe positive political change is possible? (*you can choose more than one answer*)

- 1) If citizens actively participate/influence politics
- 2) If the government conducts successful reforms
- 3) There is no possibility of positive political change
- 4) Other circumstances _____
- _____
- 5) I don't know

3.2 Thinking about the problems you see in your community/region/country, how much difference do you believe you can personally make in solving the problems you see? (*choose one answer for each level*)

| | A great deal of difference | Some difference | A little difference | No difference at all | I don't know |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Your community | | | | | |
| Your region | | | | | |
| On the national level | | | | | |

3.3 With which statement do you agree?

- 1) Politics is a way for the powerless to acquire equal footing
- 2) Politics is a means for the already powerful to maintain advantage
- 3) Cannot choose

3.4 What political rights do you believe you have? (*choose as many as apply*)

- 1) The right to participate in peaceful demonstrations and rallies
- 2) The right to vote and be elected
- 3) The right to participate in government affairs
- 4) Freedom of speech
- 5) The right to political association
- 6) The right to petition
- 7) None of the rights
- 8) I don't know

3.5 Please, indicate one response to each statement listed below:

1) I don't think public officials care much about my personal opinions

1 2 3 4 5

agree somewhat agree not sure somewhat disagree disagree

2) Voting is the only way I can have any say about how the government runs things

1 2 3 4 5

agree somewhat agree not sure somewhat disagree disagree

3) Sometimes politics and the government seem so complicated that I can hardly understand what's going on.

1 2 3 4 5

agree somewhat agree not sure somewhat disagree disagree

4) In this country, you must be very careful about what you say and do with regard to politics

1 2 3 4 5

agree somewhat agree not sure somewhat disagree disagree

5) I have no say about what the government does

1 2 3 4 5

agree somewhat agree not sure somewhat disagree disagree

3.6 Do you feel that you have more opportunities to participate in politics than your parents had at your age?

- 1) No
- 2) More no than yes
- 3) Sometimes yes, sometimes no
- 4) More yes than no
- 5) Yes
- 6) I don't know

3.7 Which statement do you agree with the most?

- 1) It is a responsibility to get involved in politics
- 2) It is a matter of choice to get involved in politics
- 3) Cannot choose

3.8 Namibia has elections this year, which party will you vote for?

- 1) Monitor Action Group (MAG)
- 2) Congress of Democrats (CoD)
- 3) United Democratic Front (UDF)
- 4) South West African National Union (SWANU)
- 5) All People's Party (APP)
- 6) South-West Africa People Organization (SWAPO)
- 7) Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP)
- 8) Republican Party (RP)
- 9) National Unity Democratic Party (NUDO)
- 10) Democratic Turnhalle Alliance of Namibia (DTA)
- 11) Namibia Democratic Movement for Change (NDMC)
- 12) Another party _____
- 13) I refuse to answer
- 14) I will not vote
- 15) I don't know

3.9 Please indicate one response to each of the following statements:

- 1) It makes no sense to vote when you know your party is going to lose

| | | | | |
|-------|----------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| agree | somewhat agree | not sure | somewhat disagree | disagree |

- 2) Many local elections are unimportant and not worth bothering with

| | | | | |
|-------|----------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| agree | somewhat agree | not sure | somewhat disagree | disagree |

- 3) So many other people vote in the national elections that it matters little whether I vote or not

| | | | | |
|-------|----------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| agree | somewhat agree | not sure | somewhat disagree | disagree |

3.10 Please, indicate whether you are interested in politics or not by circling one answer:

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| I am not interested in politics | 1 agree | 2 somewhat agree | 3 not sure | 4 somewhat disagree | 5 disagree |
|---------------------------------------|------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|---------------|

3.11 Please, indicate one response to the following statement:

I really dislike politics and government

| | | | | |
|-------|----------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| agree | somewhat agree | not sure | somewhat disagree | disagree |

3.12 What do you usually do when you are with close friends who start talking about politics? (*choose one answer*)

- 1) I hardly ever listen when my friends start talking about politics
- 2) I usually listen but I never participate in the discussion
- 3) I participate sometimes, but I don't often give my opinion
- 4) Usually I participate in the discussion and give my opinion
- 5) My close friends do not talk about politics
- 6) Other

If you chose answer No. 3 or No. 4, please, answer the question below. If you chose answer No. 1, No. 2, No. 5 or No. 6 move on to the question 3.13.

3.12.1 When you get together with your close friends, how often do you discuss political matters?

- 1) Every time we meet we discuss politics
- 2) Often
- 3) Occasionally
- 4) Rarely
- 5) I don't know

3.13 What do you usually do when you are with family members who start talking about politics?
(choose one answer)

- 1) I hardly ever listen when my family members start talking about politics
- 2) I usually listen but I never participate in the discussion
- 3) I participate sometimes, but not often that I give my opinion
- 4) Usually I participate in the discussion and give my opinion
- 5) My family members do not talk about politics
- 6) Other _____

If you chose answer No. 3 or No. 4, please, answer the question bellow. If you chose answer No. 1, No. 2, No. 5 or No. 6 move on to the question 4.1.

3.13.1 When you get together with your family, how often do you discuss politics?

- 1) Every time we meet we discuss politics
- 2) Often
- 3) Occasionally
- 4) Rarely
- 5) I don't know

Part 4 – In this part of a questionnaire we are concerned with your attitudes regarding social relations, memberships, and other social issues.

4.1 Which of the following statements do you agree the most?

- 1) Most people try to take advantage of others if given the chance
- 2) Most people try to be fair in their dealings with others
- 3) Cannot choose

4.2 Are you a member of any non- political organization? (for instance, voluntary association, church organization)

- 1) Yes _____ → 4.2.1 If yes, what kind of organization(s) it is? _____
- 2) No

4.3 Please, indicate one response to each statement:

1. I often worry about current events or public affairs

| | | | | |
|-------|----------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| agree | somewhat agree | not sure | somewhat disagree | disagree |

2. Every person should give some of his/her time for the good of his/her town or country

| | | | | |
|-------|----------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| agree | somewhat agree | not sure | somewhat disagree | disagree |

3. At the University I usually volunteer for projects and activities

| | | | | |
|-------|----------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| agree | somewhat agree | not sure | somewhat disagree | disagree |

4.4 Which of the following statements do you agree the most?

- 1) Most people try to take advantage of me if given the chance
- 2) Most people try to be fair in their dealings with me
- 3) Cannot choose

4.5 For how many full years have you been living at permanent residence? (*home*) _____

4.6 How many close friends do you have? _____

Part 5 - In this part of a survey we are interested in your views on political participation.

5.1 Do you plan to vote in the upcoming election for the president and the National Assembly? (*choose one answer for each election*)

| | presidential election | National Assembly election |
|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Yes, I will vote | | |
| Not sure | | |
| No, I will not vote | | |

5.2 Have you personally done any of these things during the past year? (*choose one answer for each activity*)

| | Yes, I've done | No, but would do if I had a chance | No, but would do under certain circumstances | No, and I would never do this |
|--|----------------------|---|---|--|
| Working with others in your community on solving community problem | | | | |
| Contacting/writing to governmental officials (local/extra-local) on the individual issue(s) | | | | |
| Writing a letter or viewpoint on political issue(s) to a journal/newspaper | | | | |
| Consulting local/regional/national officials on a public issue | | | | |
| Participating in lawful demonstrations, rallies, marches | | | | |
| Collaborating with local/regional/national officials on solving a public issue | | | | |
| Contacting/writing to governmental officials (local/extra-local) on local/regional/national issue(s) | | | | |

5.3 Are you a member of any political organization?

1) Yes —————→ 5.3.1 If yes, how do you view your role in the organization/organizations?

2) No
organization(s)

1) I participate actively in the work of the

2) I do not actively participate, but I have a membership

3) Other

4) I don't know

5.4 Do you personally see any problem in people like you trying to persuade others how to vote?

- 1) No, I do not see any problem with it
- 2) It depends on the circumstances
- 3) Yes, I see a problem with it
- 4) I don't know

5.5 Some people feel it is important to participate in political affairs. Others feel that it is bad or not important to do so. What is your opinion?

- 1) It is important
- 2) Sometimes it is important, sometimes not
- 3) It is unimportant
- 4) I don't know

Part 6 – In this section we would like to know more about you.

6.1 What is your age? _____

6.2 How many full years of post secondary education have you completed? _____

6.3 What is your major? _____

6.4 What is your gender?

- 1) Female
- 2) Male

6.5 What is your parents' monthly income? N \$ _____

6.6 What is your parents' occupation?

| | Mother | Father |
|---|--------|--------|
| Never worked | | |
| Unemployed/unskilled labourer | | |
| Farmer | | |
| Small scale business/skilled labourer | | |
| Medium/big business/formally employed and professionals | | |
| Not applicable | | |

6.7 What is your ethnicity/tribe?

- 1) Ovambo
- 2) German
- 3) Kavango
- 4) Afrikaaner
- 5) Nama
- 6) English
- 7) Herero
- 8) Caprivian
- 9) Mixed
- 10) Damara
- 11) Baster
- 12) Other _____
- 13) I refuse to say

6.8 What region are you from? (*you can circle more than one*)

- 1) Khomas
- 2) Caprivi
- 3) Erongo
- 4) Hardap
- 5) Karas
- 6) Kavango
- 7) Kunene
- 8) Ohangwena
- 9) Omaheke
- 10) Omusati
- 11) Oshana
- 12) Otjikoto
- 13) Otjozondjupa

Appendix 3. Questions for focus groups.

Focus groups N1 & N2:

- 1) What University you are in and what program you are doing?
- 2) What does democracy mean to you? What first comes to your mind when you hear this word?
- 3) According to your definition of democracy, do you think that Namibia is a democracy?
- 4) Do you think that the president and members of Parliament are interested in your well-being and the well-being of your community?
- 5) Do you think that regional councilors, local authority councilors and traditional leaders are interested in your well-being and the well-being of your community?
- 6) What does political participation or political activity mean to you?
- 7) Do you think that you have more opportunities to participate in politics that your parents had at your age?
- 8) Some of you participated in politics last year. What were the benefits and costs of participation?¹
- 9) Some of you didn't participate in any political activity. Why?
- 10) Do you think that young people today have voice and that elders in politics listen to their views?
- 11) Where do you usually obtain the information on politics?
- 12) Do you think that university students in general are active in politics?
- 13) What do you think can make students participate more?

¹ The question regarding costs and benefits was not asked in the second focus group.

Focus group N3:

- 1) What program you are in and what university you are at?
- 2) What does democracy mean to you? What first comes to your mind when you hear this word?
- 3) According to your definition of democracy, do you think that Namibia is a democracy?
- 4) Do you trust the president and the members of Parliament in terms of what they are doing for the country?
- 5) What about regional councilors, local authority councilors and traditional leaders? Do you trust them?
- 6) What does political participation or political activity mean to you?
- 7) How much difference do you believe you can personally make on community, regional, and national levels?
- 8) Some of you participated in the political activity last year. What was it about?
- 9) Some of you did not participate in any political activities. What are the reasons for that?
- 10) Do you think that young people today have voice and that elders in politics listen to their views?
- 11) Do you think that you have more opportunities to participate in politics that your parents had at your age?
- 12) Where do you usually obtain the information on politics?
- 13) You all agreed that university students are not very active in politics. What can make them participate more?
- 14) What about you personally? What can make you participate?

Focus groups N4:

- 1) What program you are in and what university you are at?
- 2) What does democracy mean to you? What first comes to your mind when you hear this word?
- 3) According to your definition of democracy, do you think that Namibia is a democracy?
- 4) Do you think that Namibia used to be more democratic in 90s and the situation is deteriorating or not?
- 5) Do you trust the president and the members of Parliament in terms of what they are doing for the country?
- 6) What about regional councilors, local authority councilors and traditional leaders? Do you trust them?
- 7) What does political participation or political activity mean to you?
- 8) Do you think that you personally can contribute to solving the problems in your community?
- 9) What about regional and national level? Do you think you can make a difference?
- 10) Where do you usually get the information on politics?
- 11) Do you think that young people today have voice and that elders in politics listen to their views?
- 12) Do you think that the university students in general are active in politics?
- 13) Personally what can motivate you to participate? What is the incentive for you to participate?
- 14) Some of you participated in the political activity last year. What was it about?
- 15) Some of you did not participate in any political activities. What are the reasons for that?

Appendix 4. Index Construction, Bivariate Analysis, Factor Analysis, and Causal Analysis of Data

In this appendix I first describe an index construction and a bivariate analysis that I conducted to see how various variables affect political participation of Namibian university students. After that, I discuss a factor analysis, which I ran to reduce a large number of variables to a smaller number of factors for further causal analysis, which is described in the final section of this appendix.

Construction of indexes

In order to verify if variables measuring a particular concept are related to each other, I conducted a factor analysis. After that, the reliability of each set of variables forming a single factor was tested to find if each set of variables consistently measures what it is supposed to measure. In all cases, a set of variables intended to measure a particular concept formed a single factor, except the statements measuring political efficacy. In this case, two factors were created. Since one of them was composed of only one variable, it was excluded from the analysis. Because of the fact that Cronbach's alpha¹ was low for other statements comprising the second factor (.358), they were also excluded from the analysis. In addition, Cronbach's alpha was only .312 for the statements measuring the attitudes of students towards democracy (democratic versus non-democratic regime; democracy versus a strong leader). I used these statements as two separate variables in a further analysis because they were of principal importance to my work. All other sets of variables forming a single factor were transformed into indexes for the use in factor and causal analyses. These indexes are as follows: political trust; government legitimacy; social responsibility; individualism; collectivism;² social justice; interest of government officials and traditional leaders in communities; making difference in community, region, country; corruption; interest of government officials and traditional leaders in personal well-being; interpersonal trust; interest in politics (political discussions); attention to politics; civic duty-voting;

¹ Cronbach's alpha is "a measure of internal consistency or reliability (Gliem & Gliem, 2003) of a rating summarizing a group of test or survey answers which measure some underlying factor" (Definition of Cronbach's alpha).

² Individualism and collectivism were left as separate indexes because students in most cases did not see any contradiction in agreeing or disagreeing with the statements characteristic of both collectivism and individualism.

membership/activity in political organization(s); intention to vote;¹ and political participation - main index. The last index is comprised of seven types of political activity, namely lawful participation in demonstrations, rallies, and marches; a collaboration with government officials on solving a public issue; contacting/writing to government officials on a public issue; writing a viewpoint/letter to a journal/newspaper; working with others in the community on solving a community problem; contacting/writing to government officials on a personal issue; and consulting government officials on a public issue. It was found that political participation is multidimensional. The correlation between voting, membership/activity in political organization(s), and all other types of political activity examined in this work was weak, ranging from .232 to .287. Therefore they were used as separate factors in further analysis.

Bivariate analysis

In order to see how socio-economic indicators affect participation in politics, I conducted bivariate analysis. Parents' income and occupation, as well as the number of completed years of postsecondary education, were not included in the analysis due to high percent of missing answers. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient² was used to measure the association between age and "Voting" and age and "Membership/activity in political organization(s)." Pearson's correlation coefficient³ was used to see if there is a correlation between age and "Political participation - main index". Cramer's V⁴ was computed to measure the association between all other socio-economic indicators and "Voting", "Activity/membership in political organization (s)", and "Political participation – main index". It was found that there is no statistically significant relationship between gender and participation in any political activity. The relationship between age and all types of political activity examined in the research was statistically significant. The older students are more likely to intend to vote, become members of political organization(s), and take part in an organization's activities. They are also more likely than younger students to participate or be

¹ Since I conducted a survey before the election took place in the Fall of 2009, I could only ask a question about whether a respondent was going to vote in the presidential and National Assembly elections. Thus, we cannot talk about the influence various factors have on the actual participation in elections. Instead the effects on the intention to vote are examined.

² A measure of correlation used when the data are ordinal.

³ A measure of correlation used when the data are interval-ratio.

⁴ A measure of correlation employed when the data are nominal.

willing to participate in other types of political activity. However, the effect of age on political activity is weak¹ (Spearman's coefficient for "Voting" is .162, Sig. = .000; for "Membership/activity in political organization(s)" it is .147, Sig. = .000; Pearson's coefficient for "Political participation – main index" is .155, Sig. = .000). The relationship between a region and "Voting" and between a region and "Political activity – main index" was not statistically significant. On the other hand, the relationship between "Membership/activity in political organization(s)" and a region was statistically significant and weak (Cramer's V = .158; Sig. = .007). Students from some regions, particularly from Ohangwena, Omusati, and Oshana (northern regions with Ovambo majority) become members of political organizations and participate in their activity more often than students from some other regions, such as Erongo (central region), Hardap (southern region), Karas (southern region), and Kavango (northern region with Kavango majority). The relationship between ethnicity/tribe and "Membership/activity in political organization(s)" was not statistically significant.² On the other hand, correlation between tribe/ethnicity and "Voting" and between tribe/ethnicity and "Political participation – main index" was statistically significant and weak (Cramer's V = .164, Sig. = .000 for voting; Cramer's V = .155, Sig. = .003 for political participation – main index). Of all the tribes and ethnicities, Ovambo students are the most active when it comes to voting. Almost half of them said that they would vote in both presidential and National Assembly elections. This comes as no surprise, since the Ovambo tribe is a major tribe in the country and is overrepresented in many political institutions. Since the number of students from other ethnicities and tribes is relatively small in the sample, it is hard to say for sure which one of them would have a greater intention to vote compared to others. A crosstabulation for ethnicity/tribe and voting shows that Herero, Caprivian and mixed students are more willing to vote than some other ethnicities/tribes such as Damaras and Basters. In the case of "Political participation – main index," Ovambo respondents again are the most active ones. Many of them have either taken part in numerous political activities in 2008 or would have done so if given the chance. Hereros and Caprivians are distinguished as less politically active than Ovambos but more

¹ For the purpose of my research, correlation is considered weak if a correlation coefficient is from .050 to .350; correlation is medium if a correlation coefficient is from .351 to .550; and if a correlation coefficient is above .550 correlation is strong.

² If there is not more than 5% chance that two events will happen at the same time by coincidence we can say that the correlation is statistically significant and two events occur at one time for a reason (What does it mean for a result to be "statistically significant"?).

active than other tribes and ethnicities. The least active among all ethnicities and tribes are Baster and Afrikaner students.

Factor measurement. Design analysis

I conducted an exploratory factor analysis, which is based on the assumption that any indicator can be associated with any factor. I anticipated that since I was using Western approaches to the explanation of political participation or non-participation in the Namibian context, some measured variables could have been associated in an unpredictable way.

Initially, I had 10 factors but after conducting a reliability analysis the number of factors became 17. The reason I made the decision to use variables comprising those factors separately in further analysis is because Cronbach's alpha for some factors was very low. The final factors are as follows:

“Government_governance” (government legitimacy; interest of government officials and traditional leaders in the well-being of the community a student is coming from; interest of government officials and traditional leaders in the personal well-being of a student; the assessment of the political regime in the country; satisfaction with democracy in the country; trust in government);

“Political capital” (civic duty – voting; attention to politics; participation in political discussions; partisanship (political affiliation));

“Political efficacy” (a number of political rights; political opportunities);

“Collective activism” (social responsibility; making difference in the community/region/country; collectivism);

“Possibility of political change”;

“Justice”;

“Civic duty_1”¹;

“Corruption”;

“Individualism”;

“Interdisciplinary trust”;

“Permanent residence”;

¹ Civic duty was measured by two variables. One of them factored with attention to politics, participation in political discussions, and political affiliation and is a part of the factor called “Political capital”. Another variable was left as a single factor.

“Number of friends”;
 “Membership in non-political organizations”;
 “Political knowledge”;
 “Politics for the powerful vs. powerless”;
 “Democracy vs. non-democracy”;
 “Democracy vs. strong leader.”

As expected, some indicators are associated or not associated in a way that was predicted.

Table 4.1 Factor Analysis on the Items Used to Generate the Factor “Government_Governance”

| Variables | Principle Components ¹ Unrotated Matrix |
|--|---|
| Government legitimacy | .655 |
| Interest in the community | .762 |
| Trust in government | .780 |
| Interest in personal well-being | .741 |
| Political regime in the country | .604 |
| Satisfaction with democracy in the country | .641 |
| Eigenvalue ² | 2.94 |
| % of variation ³ | 49.03 |
| Cronbach’s alpha= .747 | |

The solution for this table cannot be rotated

As it was found, questions on whether Namibia is a democracy or not and questions on satisfaction with democracy in Namibia did not measure how students viewed democracy. Instead these questions showed students’ attitudes towards political processes that are taking

¹ Principal components analysis is “a factor extraction method used to form uncorrelated linear combinations of the observed variables” (SPSS program, Help).

² Eigenvalue is the variance of the factor (Annotated SPSS output. Factor analysis).

³ % of variance is “the percent of total variance accounted for by each factor” (Annotated SPSS output. Factor analysis).

place in the country, as well as their attitudes towards the government. As we can see from the Table 4.1, there is a positive correlation among the variables, meaning that if a student trusts the government and believes that government officials and traditional leaders are interested in his or her personal well-being and the well-being of his or her community, he or she will also think that the government is legitimate and Namibia is a democracy and will be satisfied with the way democracy works in the country.

Table 4.2 Factor Analysis on the Items Used to Generate the Factor “Political Capital”

| Variables | Principle Components Unrotated Matrix |
|---|--|
| Civic Duty - voting | .674 |
| Attention to politics | .812 |
| Partisanship | .553 |
| Interest in politics (political discussion) | .636 |
| Eigenvalue | 1.82 |
| % of variation | 45.59 |
| Cronbach’s alpha= .512 | |

The solution for this table cannot be rotated

I measure political capital by looking at its five components, namely attention to politics, interest in politics, a sense of civic duty, partisanship, and political efficacy. The factor “Political capital” is composed of all these components except political efficacy. Without further analysis it is hard to say why the variables measuring political efficacy do not factor well with other components of political capital. I measure civic duty by using two variables. One of them measures how students view civic duty when it comes to voting. This variable is one of the components of the factor. Another variable measuring civic duty in a more generic sense, as a duty to participate in various kinds of political activity, was left as a single factor. As can be seen in Table 4.2, all the variables measuring political capital correlate positively, which means that if students are interested in participation in political discussions they will also very likely support some political party, pay attention to politics, and feel that it is important to vote.

Table 4.3 Factor Analysis on the Items Used to Generate the Factor “Political efficacy”

| Variables | Principle Components Unrotated Matrix |
|------------------------------|--|
| A number of political rights | .783 |
| Political opportunities | .783 |
| Eigenvalue | 1.23 |
| % of variation | 61.3 |
| Cronbach’s alpha= .272 | |

The solution for this table cannot be rotated

Even though I chose to call the factor presented in Table 4.3 “Political efficacy,” only two out of five variables that were used to measure political efficacy were included in this factor.¹ Three other variables were left as single factors. As can be observed in Table 4.3, there is a positive correlation between a number of rights and political opportunities. In other words, if a student believes that he or she has more opportunities to take part in political matters compared to his or her parents at his or her age, this student will also tend to think that he or she has a larger set of political rights.

¹ Initially, six variables were used but one of them was excluded at the earlier stage of the analysis (see the previous section on the construction of indexes).

Table 4.4 Factor Analysis on the Items Used to Generate the Factor “Collective Activism”

| Variables | Principle Components Unrotated Matrix |
|--|--|
| Social responsibility | .653 |
| Collectivism | .692 |
| Making difference in the community/region/country | .719 |
| Eigenvalue | 1.42 |
| % of variation | 47.4 |
| Cronbach’s alpha= .439 | |

The solution for this table cannot be rotated

The factor “Collective activism” is very interesting because it is composed of three variables measuring three different things (see Table 4.4). Making a difference in the community/region/country is a part of political efficacy, which is a component of political capital. Collectivism was measured as the opposite to individualism; both collectivism and individualism are the components of political culture. As for social responsibility, it is a part of social capital. All three variables correlate in a positive way, which means that the more students believe they can make difference in their communities, regions, or the country, the more collectivist they are and the more they are willing to volunteer to help others or to do something that will be beneficial to a large group of people.

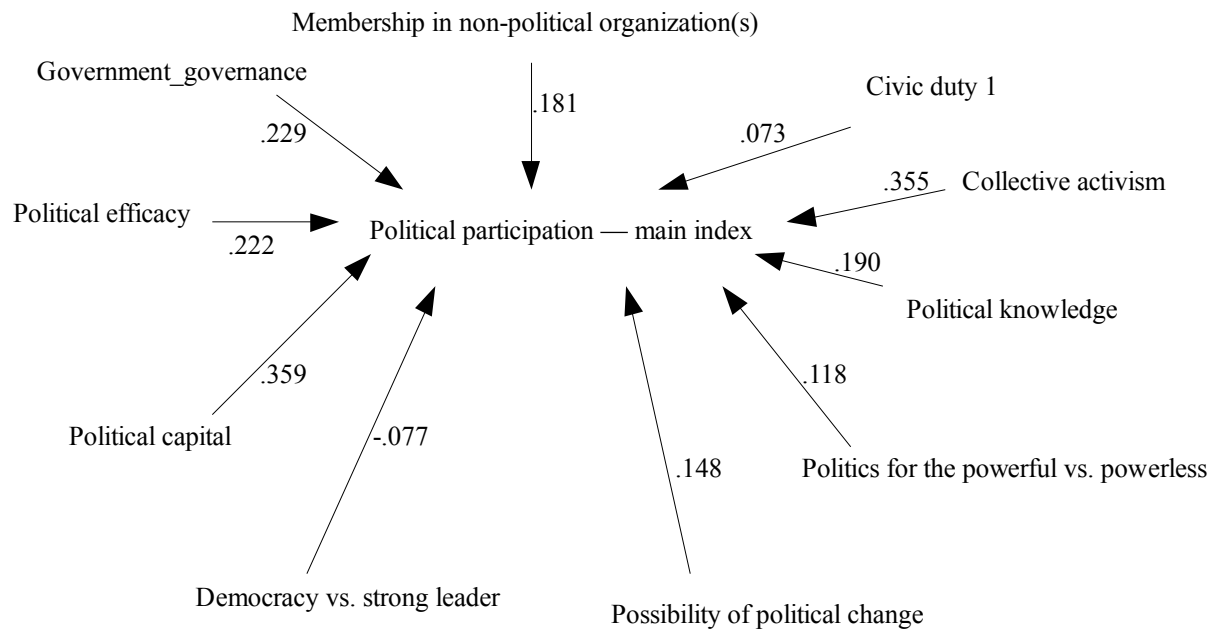
All other factors that are going to be used in further analysis are composed of only one variable and as a result are not described in this section. In the final part of this appendix, I discuss the results of the causal analysis.

Causal Analysis

After conducting the factor analysis I ran a causal analysis in order to examine how various factors described in the previous section affect membership/activity in political organizations, the intention to vote and participation or the desire to participate in other various political activities, namely taking part in lawful demonstrations and rallies, contacting and writing to government officials on personal and collective matters, writing a viewpoint or a letter on political issues to a journal or a newspaper, working with others in a community on solving a community problem, consulting government officials on a public issue, and collaborating with them on solving some issue. Figures 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 illustrate the results.¹ Overall, the influence of factors accounting for political capital, political culture, and social capital is weak; only in a few cases is it medium or strong. It was also found that the number of close friends, whether students are individualist or not, interpersonal trust, the way students look at social justice, and the preference for democracy versus a non-democratic regime do not affect university students' participation in politics at all.

¹ The results for the intention to vote and membership/activity in political organizations should be analyzed with caution since I used a linear regression for testing how various factors affect these types of political activity. The variables "Intention to vote" and "Membership/activity in political organization(s)" are ordinal.

Figure 4.1 Causal Analysis for Political Participation – Main Index

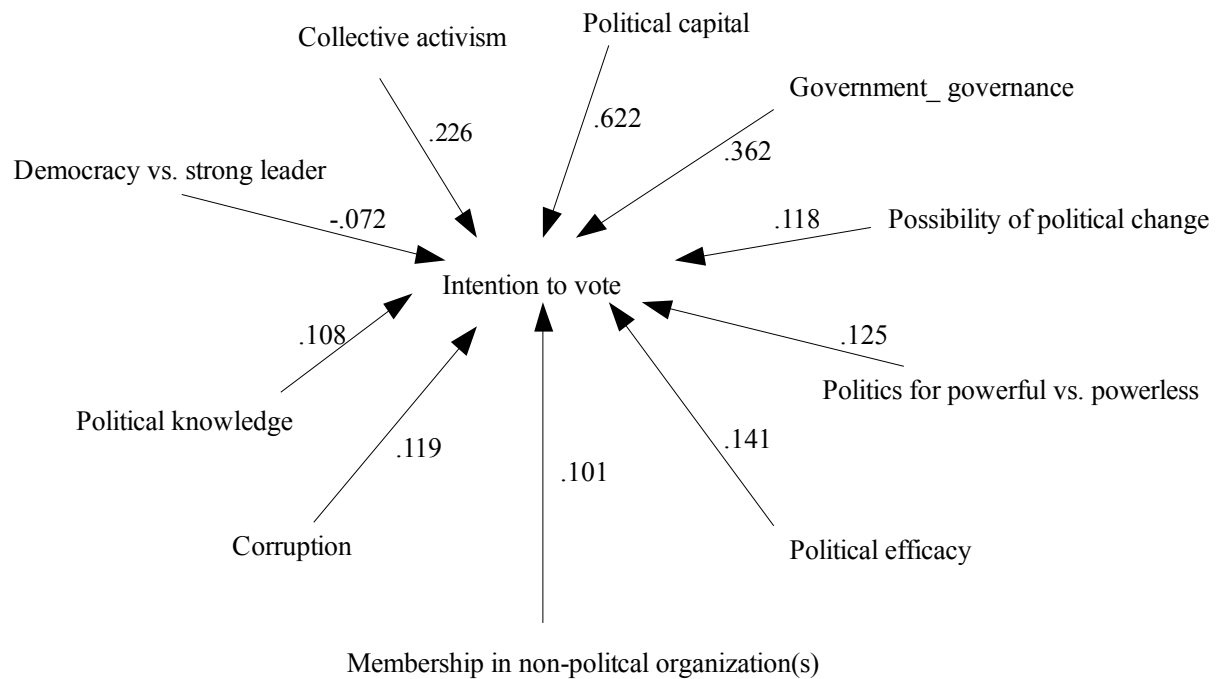


As it can be seen in Figure 4.1, “Political capital” has the highest effect among all the factors on “Political participation – main index”. However, the effect of this factor is only weak to medium (.359, Sig. = .000). This means that the more students pay attention to politics, take part in discussions on politics, have a high sense of civic duty when it comes to voting and feel affiliated with some political party, the more likely they will participate in political activities listed above. “Collective activism” has almost the same effect on “Political participation – main index” (.355, Sig. = .000). The more university students believe that they can make difference in the community or region they come from and in their country, the more socially responsible they are, and the more collective feelings they have, the more likely they will get involved in the political activities. The “Government_governance” and “Political efficacy” factors have almost the same weak positive effect on “Political participation – main index” (.229, Sig. = .000 for “Government_governance” and .222, Sig. = .000 for “Political efficacy”). In the first case, it means that the more likely university students think that the Namibian government is legitimate, that government officials and traditional leaders are interested in students’ well-being and well-being of their communities, that Namibia is a democracy, and the more they trust government officials and traditional leaders and express satisfaction with the way democracy works in Namibia, the higher the chance that they will want to participate in the political activity. In the second case,

participation in the political activities is affected by the way students view political opportunities and rights. In other words, if a student believes that compared to his or her parents at his or her age, he or she has more opportunities to participate in political matters and that he or she has numerous political rights, the chance is high that he or she takes part in politics or may take part in it in the future. The influence of the way students view participation in political affairs (a responsibility or a choice) and the preference for democracy versus a strong leader are statistically significant but very weak (.073, Sig.= .033 for the first factor and -.077, Sig.= .041 for the second factor). There is only a slightly higher chance that if a Namibian university student believes that it is a responsibility to get involved in politics, he or she will actually participate, compared to a student who thinks that it is a matter of choice to participate in politics. As for the attitude towards democracy, there is a slightly higher chance of participating in political activities among students who think that sometimes a strong political leader is preferable to democracy than a weak leader. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that the majority of students who participate in political activity are Ovambos who are in many cases SWAPO supporters. The issue of leadership is very important within the ranks of the ruling party and among its partisans. A party's leader who will very likely become the president of the country has to be a charismatic and strong figure. Therefore, we can assume that the symbolic meaning of leadership overshadows the importance of democracy for some students.

All other factors presented in Figure 4.1, namely "Membership in non-political organization(s)," "Political knowledge," and "Possibility of political change" have a weak positive effect on "Political participation – main index" (.181, Sig. = .000 for membership; .190, Sig. = .000 for political knowledge; .148, Sig. = .002 for the possibility of political change). We can conclude that if a student is a member of a non-political organization, if his or her knowledge of political matters is good, and if he or she thinks that political change is possible, then he or she will also quite likely get involved in the political activities examined in my study. As for the attitude of students towards politics as a way for the already-powerful to maintain advantage or a way for the powerless to acquire equal footing, which is a measure of political efficacy, it is not possible to say whether the effect is negative or positive since the variable forming this factor is nominal. However, we can suggest that political efficacy measured by this variable has a weak effect on political activity (.118, Sig. = .003).

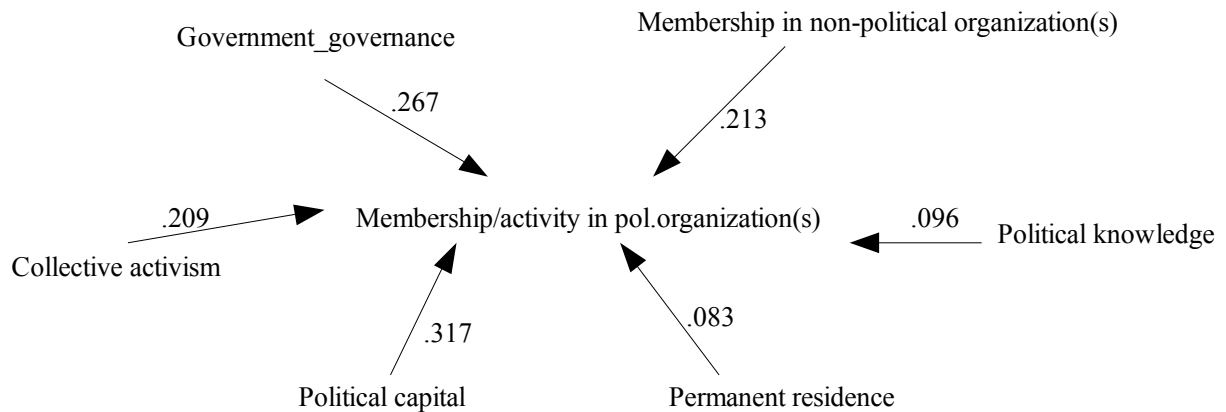
Figure 4.2 Causal Analysis for Intention to Vote



Looking at Figure 4.2, we can see that one factor stands out as having the largest positive effect on the intention to vote: “Political capital” (.622, Sig. = .000). This means that if a student supports some political party, takes part in discussions on political issues, pays attention to political matters and has a strong sense of duty when it comes to voting, he or she will very likely want to vote. “Government_governance” has a medium positive influence on the intention to vote (.362, Sig. = .000). Therefore, we can conclude that the more positive attitudes students have towards Namibian government and governance, the higher their chances of wanting to participate in an election. “Collective activism” has a weak positive effect on the intention to vote (.226; Sig. = .000). In other words, if students are socially responsible, have a strong sense of collectivism and believe that they can contribute to making a difference in their community, region, or country, they are more likely to have the intent to vote. All other factors presented in Figure 4.2 have a weaker positive effect on the intention to vote except “Democracy vs. strong leader,” which has a negative and very weak effect (-.072; Sig. = .050). Again, as in case of Figure 4.1, we can conclude that there is a slightly higher chance that a university student will want to vote if he or she thinks that sometimes a strong leader is preferable to democracy. Membership in non-political organization(s) has a statistically significant influence that is weak (.101, Sig. = .003). This means that being a member of some non-political organization(s) results in a slightly higher

disposition for voting. The same can be said about “Possibility of political change” and “Political efficacy” (.118, Sig. = .021 for the first factor and .141, Sig. = .000 for the second factor). If a student thinks that he or she has more political opportunities and more political rights than his or her parents had at his or her age, and if he or she believes that a positive political change can happen, then he or she will more likely want to vote. As in Figure 4.1, “Politics for powerful vs. powerless” has a weak effect on the intention to vote. Finally, the way students assess corruption has a weak positive effect, meaning that if a student thinks that a government is not very corrupt he or she will feel more likely to vote.

Figure 4.3 Causal Analysis for Membership/Activity in Political Organization(s)



As it can be observed in Figure 4.3, only a few factors examined in the statistical analysis have an effect on membership and activity in political organizations. Permanent residence and political knowledge very weakly and positively affect this type of political activity (.083, Sig. = .015 for permanent residence and .096, Sig. = .004 for political knowledge). This means that the longer a student lives at a permanent residence and the more significant his or her political knowledge is, the more likely it is that he or she will become involved in political organizations. “Membership in non-political organization(s)” and “Collective activism” have almost the same weak positive effect (.213, Sig. = .000 for membership and .209, Sig. = .000 for collective activism), meaning that if a student is a member of one or more than one non-political organization, he or she will more likely be a member and be active in some political organization. As for the positive effect of “Collective activism,” the higher social responsibility, collectivism, and the belief that one can make

difference at the communal, regional, and national levels, the more likely it is that a student will become a member of some political organization and get involved in its activity. “Government_governance” also has a weak positive influence (.267, Sig. = .000). In other words, the more positive a student’s view is on governance and government in the country, the higher the chance that he or she will get involved in the work of some political organization. The same is true for political capital, which has a weak positive effect on membership/activity in political organizations (.317, Sig. = .000).

Appendix 5

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled Political Participation of Namibian University Students: Realities and Prospects. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask questions you might have.

My name is Maria Latukhina. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada (phone number: 081-4348725; e-mail: mary@susu.ru). As a partial fulfillment of the requirements of my PhD, I am doing a study of political participation of Namibian youth. The purpose of my research is to better understand the factors determining participation of young people in politics. For this research, I am doing a survey of students' opinions at the University of Namibia and Polytechnic of Namibia. Apart from that, I am also conducting focus groups with some of the surveyed students. You are invited to participate in the survey, which will take about forty minutes. There are no risks associated with your participation in the survey. The data collected will be used for my dissertation and will be presented at an appropriate conference. It will be reported only in aggregate form.

Your participation is voluntary, and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. The information that you share will be held in strict confidence and discussed only with my supervisors. You are free to withdraw from a survey for any reason at any time, without penalty of any sort. If you withdraw, your data will be deleted from the research project and destroyed, if desired. The decision to withdraw will not affect your grades in the course. You will not be identified in the research document. The data that will be collected during this survey will be stored by my research co-supervisors for a minimum of five years. When it is no longer required it will be appropriately destroyed.

If you have any questions concerning the research project, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact me at the number and e-mail provided if you have other questions. If you like I will send you a summary of the results upon completion of the research work. For this purpose please contact me by e-mail. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioral Research Ethics Board on March 4, 2009. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (00 1 306 966-2084).

I have read and understood the description provided. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my record.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____ 2009

Signature of Researcher: _____

Appendix 6

Participant Contact Form

I thank you for taking time to help me with this study on politics and political participation.

I would like to be able to explore views, feelings and attitudes towards politics and political activity with you and other students in more detail. If you are interested in participating in a discussion group with me and other university students, please sign the form below. This form will be kept separate from the survey you have just completed to ensure that your responses to the survey have been kept totally confidential. Taking part in this further study will involve participating in a focus group. The focus group will take no more than 90 minutes to complete.

By signing this paper, you agree to allow me to contact you at a later date to provide you with information about when and where a focus group will be held. You are not obligated to participate and can change your mind at any time. This research has been approved by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioral Research Ethics Board.

I, _____, agree to be contacted at a later time in relation to participating in a focus group. I understand that I am under no obligation to be a focus group participant and that I can choose not participate at any time.

(Signature)

(Date)

(Phone number)